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DEFENCE

OF

Christian Liberty;

In a LETTER to the Anonymous Author of a late Pamphlet, entituled, *A New Creed considered; or, the Principles of the Belfast-Society, alias the Presbytery of Antrim, lately published by the Revd. Dr. James Kirkpatrick, briefly examined. By a Minister of the General Synod.*

By JAMES KIRKPATRICK, D. D. K

Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free, ----- Gal. V. 1.

BELFAST:

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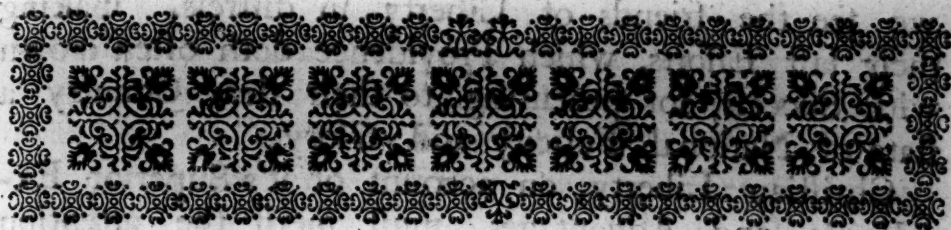
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CHRISTIAN LIBERTY;

In A LETTER, &c.

Reverend Sir,

Civil Liberty has been always supported by invincible force of Argument; and, Civilized Nations have never reckoned it too dear a purchase, when they could gain and secure it at a vast expense of Blood and Treasure. The History of past ages is full of memorable transactions to that purpose. There we behold numbers of Steady Patriots in the State and of brave Heroes in the Field, acting their several Parts in concert with Honour and Judgment; inspired with a noble ardour of mind, and with a just Zeal for the Rights of Mankind, never to be

Sacrificed to Arbitrary Power in any Shape. There we see the friends of Liberty in distress, making their last Efforts, which Providence doth often crown with Success, for procuring to their dear Country a state of National Felicity and Glory.

Christian Liberty, on account of it's Superior Excellence and Advantages, must merit the attention of such as have the true Interest of Religion at heart. It is an High and Honourable priviledge to *call no man Father upon the Earth*, and that *one is our Master, even Christ*, to have the whole of our Religion under the sole Direction of Him, whose perfect Laws are the productions of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, incapable of Amendment, and abhorrent of Additions, by fallible mortals.

This Divine Immunity is an excellent means for preserving the Religion of Christ in it's original purity; being quite opposite to all the human Inventions and Impositions, by which it has often been, and is still apt to be, miserably polluted and adulterated. It is a strong Barriere against all encroachments of men, of every Station in Life, upon the Sacred Rights of Conscience and private Judgment, over which none of them can have any just Title to a *proper Authority*; they being wholly subject to Him, who is the *only Lord of Conscience*.

This Sacred Liberty, were it consistently and universally maintained, would go well nigh to banish out of *Christendom* many devouring Plagues, which have long infested it, to the great Scandal of the Christian Name; such as, SUPERSTITION, SCHISM, a narrow PARTY-SPIRIT, a furious BLIND ZEAL, Learned DISPUTATIOUS TRIFLING, and *doating about Questions and Strifes of words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmisings, perverse Disputing of men of corrupt Minds, and destitute of the Truth.* (1 Tim.

vi. 4, 5.), SPIRITUAL TYRANNY, with all the Mischiefs of POPERY and PERSECUTION. In opposition to all these Abominations, it would effectually promote Peace and Unity in the Christian Church, which is the Kingdom of Christ; a Kingdom of *Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*; a Kingdom erected in the world for the Reformation of Mankind, for forming the Image of God in the Soul of Man, and for exalting us to the Eternal Glory and Happiness of Heaven.

The Occasion of my being led into a Debate upon this Important and Useful Subject, was this. The Presbytery of *Antrim*, of which I have the Honour of being a Member, laid before the General Synod, in the Year 1726, an healing Paper, called, *Expedients for Peace among the Protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland*. Their first Expedient was mutual forbearance, warmly recommended in the Gospel, and applicable to their Differences in Judgment and Practice. To this end, they expressed their Sentiments of Christian Liberty in SIX PROPOSITIONS, which contain their Opinions on the Points controverted between their Brethren and them. These Propositions they Published in the Year 1727, in their *NARRATIVE of the Proceedings of Seven General Synods of the Northern Presbyterians in Ireland, &c.* Page 185, 186, 187, 188. I have here transcribed them, that the Reader may see them in one view, and afterwards turn to any one of them, as it is referred to in the Course of the Debate.

THE SIX PROPOSITIONS.

Prop. I. OUR Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head, King and Law-giver to his Church, hath by his invariable Laws, recorded in the New Testament, perfectly and sufficiently Determined all the Conditions and Terms which the Christian Church, or any part of it, or any private Member

Member or Members, or any Officer or Officers in it, considered either in his or their Relation to particular Churches or Congregations, or to the Catholick Church, or to Ecclesiastical Associations and Assemblies, ought to comply with, in order to their being Qualified for, received into, and continued in external Religious Communion, whether Ministerial or Christian, in the visible Church. All Christians who comply with Christ's Terms, have a right by the Gospel Charter to be received into religious Communion in all Churches in which they are called to it; and no Church or Set of uninspired Men whether met in Synods, Councils, or any other Society, have any Power from Christ to add any other Terms of religious Communion to those he hath settled in the Gospel; and when ever they presume to do so, all their Decisions, Laws and Canons, and all the penal Sanctions annexed to them, are Null and Void in themselves, not only for want of a competent Authority to enact them, but for their contrariety to some plain and important Laws of the Gospel, wherein the blessed Head of the Church hath reserved to himself the peculiar Power and Prerogative of enacting and prescribing all necessary Conditions and Terms of our religious Communion; and when Christians refuse Compliance with such Impositions, they are so far from being Guilty of despising lawful Authority, that their pious Zeal for the scriptural Purity and catholick Simplicity of religious Communion ought to be commended after the Example of St. Paul, who in such a Case wou'd not give place by Subjection, no not for an Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel might be continued, Gal. ii. 5.

Prop. II. CANDIDATES for the Holy Ministry may give clear and sufficient Evidence of their Soundness in the Faith, without subscribing or professing an Assent to any one imposed uninspired Form of Articles or Confession of Faith; and they may as fully satisfy their Ordainers, concerning their fitness to preach the Christian Faith, without

without Subscribing any such Confession, as they may prove their Aptness to preside in the publick Worship of God, without declaring their Assent to any prescribed Human Liturgy or form of Prayer.

Prop. III. *WE* are humbly of Opinion, that the great Head of the Church hath given no power to the Church to make any Canon or religious Law, by which an Inherent into the Ministry who gives sufficient Proof of his Soundness in the Faith, and of his having all the other ministerial Qualifications and Abilities required in the Gospel, shall be refused Licence to preach the Gospel, Ordination or Instalment, meerly because he refuseth to give his Assent or Subscription to the Westminster-Confession, or to any one uninspired Confession, as the sole and exclusive Test and Standard of Orthodoxy and Term of ministerial Communion; and seeing Christ himself hath neither made, nor given any Power to others to make any such Law, it ought to be treated and considered by all Persons affected by it as NULL and VOID in it self: And it is the Duty of Ministers to licence, ordain, and instal, upon a regular Application, all who are Qualified according to the Gospel, any pretended Law or Canon of any church whatsoever to the contrary notwithstanding.

Prop. IV. To impose a Declaration of Assent to the Westminster-Confession upon Parents, as the Condition of the Baptism of their Children, is to add a new Term of Communion which Christ never appointed; to encourage implicit Faith, and the taking of the Name of God in vain, by the greatest Number of Parents, whose Capacity, Education and Opportunities can't be supposed sufficient to enable them to make such a Profession with Understanding & Judgment; is an arbitrary Refusal of a Seal of the Christian Covenant, and a gross Abuse of the pastoral Office; therefore we can't in conscience join in any such Imposition, tho' we scruple not to give our publick Advice and Recommendation to Parents, at the Baptism of their Children,

Children, seriously to peruse the Westminster-Confession and Catechisms, as a good Summary of the main Heads of the Christian Doctrine, comparing them with the Word of God; that their Faith stand not in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God; and that they would use them as good Helps for their Growth in Knowledge, and for instructing their Children.

Prop. V. *THE requiring from the Members of our Judicatories, or from any other Christian in Communion with us, Declarations of Faith, upon the Penalty of Non-communication, while the Person required to make such Declarations stands in Judgment upon an Accusation, and cannot be fairly convicted upon Evidence; or, for removing of Jealousies, even tho' the Declaration should be required from an Apprehension in the Judicatory requiring it, that it will contribute to the Glory of God, and the Edification of Souls, appears to us to be a new Term of Communion which Christ hath not prescribed; and the setting up in the Church an EXORBITANT and ARBITRARY Power, contrary to the Essential Rights of natural Equity, ever since of Christian Discipline; a Snare to Conscience, destructive of the Liberties of Christians, and the holding of an Inquisition, justly complain'd of, and clearly refuted from the Holy Scriptures, by the most pious and learned Protestants of all Persuasions; and a tame Submission to such Claims of Power, and a Compliance with its Demands, even tho' the Article to be declared, should appear true and important to him upon whom the Declaration is imposed, appears to us to be a sinful Violation of some plain and important Laws of the Gospel.*

Prop. VI. *SUBSCRIPTIONS and Declarations which are called VOLUNTARY, when the Subscribers and Declarers know that the Non-subscribers and Non-declarers must incur a popular Odium, and are in Danger of being rendered useless in the Work of the Ministry,*
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with respect to many at least, who they know will break Communion with them on that Score, seem to us not to be really voluntary; but to carry with them all the Force and Sting of real Impositions, loaded with heavy and severe Penalties, and therefore we can't in Conscience comply with them.

In the Year 1741, The Presbytery of *Antrim* advised me to publish a Sermon preached by the Reverend Mr. *James Duchal*, on the melancholy occasion of the Death of the late Reverend Mr. *John Abernethy*, with an *Appendix* (prepared likewise by Mr. *Duchal*) containing some brief Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of the late Reverend Messieurs *Thomas Shaw*, *William Taylor*, *Michael Bruce*, and *Samuel Haliday*. These five worthy Ministers, having all cheerfully concurred in the *Six Propositions*, I was obliged to publish the Propositions, for explaining the Sentiments of Christian Liberty, which they had espoused. Upon this occasion, in the Year 1742, you published the Pamphlet mentioned in my Title-Page, containing exceptions against the *Six Propositions*.

For enlightening the Subject of this DEFENCE, I desire that the Connection as well as Matter of the SIX PROPOSITIONS may be carefully observed. The FIRST Proposition gives the true Idea of *Christian Liberty*, as it relates to our external Religious Profession and Practice, and the just Foundation upon which it stands. Unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion are violations of it, and a tame compliance with them betrays it. But true Christian Liberty acknowledges no other Limitations but what are set to it by the Laws of Christ. The great Truths contained in this Proposition, being the stable foundation and preservative of the Liberty where-with Christ has made us free, ought not to be considered as Party-principles introduced into the Con-

troverſy between *Subſcribers* and *Non-subscribers* in the North of *Ireland*; but as General Important Principles of Chriſtianity, in which all Sects and Parties, all denominations of Chriſtians are deeply concerned. The Impoſing Spirit is the only thing that has made, and kept up, Parties in the Church of Chriſt. Take out of the Church all Terms of Communion which are not to be found in the BIBLE, all party-diſtinctions will immediately evanish, and pure Catholic Chriſtianity will remain and flouriſh in the world. For the Service of ſo Glorious a Cauſe, I have collected and explained the Scripture-Arguments againſt all *unſcriptural Terms* of Communion in ſuch univerſal Terms, as to be juſtly applicable to *all caſes* where ſuch unſcriptural Terms are impoſed; ſo as to be of General uſe among Chriſtians, in an affair of great Moment, *viz.* the regulation of their religious Communion, according to the Scriptures. The other FIVE Propositions contain a true and juſt application of the FIRST to the Impoſition of human Creeds and Confessions, Declarations, and Proceedings by way of Inquiſition, mentioned in Synodical debates, or controverted between Miniſters and their Hearers.

The method I deſign to purſue in this DEFENCE is *Fiſt*, to prove the Truth of the SIX PROPOSITIONS in the order in which they ſtand: *Secondly*, to answer your Exceptions againſt them, conſidering what you advance againſt the FIRST before I enter on the proof of the SECOND, and to treat them all in the ſame manner, that the evidence *for* and *againſt* each of them may be more eaſily weighed, and the Reader aſſiſted in judging which of them do's preponderate in an unprejudiced Mind; and, LASTLY, when the Argumentative part of this paper is finiſhed, I hope you'll excuſe me, *Sir*, if I ſhall take ſome notice of your perſonal reflections, of your miſrepresentations of Fact, and

and of your manner of writing, wherein you seem to act out of Character; with a friendly Admonition to you to amend what is blameable.

A D E F E N C E of The F I R S T P R O P O S I T I O N.

FOR proof of the First Proposition (which the Reader is desired to peruse, Page 5.) I offer the following Arguments.

A R G U M E N T I.

The appointment of any Terms of Religious Communion whether Ministerial or Christian, beside those already fixed in the Gospel, is an Usurpation of the Royal Prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head, Lord, Lawgiver, and King of his Church, which is His Kingdom: And therefore, the FIRST Proposition is not only true, but very important. That Christ is the only Head, King and Lawgiver of his Church, is evident from the following passages of Scripture, Matth. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. *But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are Brethren. And call no Man your Father upon the earth: for one is your Father which is in Heaven. Neither be ye called Masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.* Ephes. i. 22, 23. *And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.* Ephes. iv. 5. *One Lord,-----* Colos. i. 17, 18. *And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and he is the Head of the Body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* John xviii. 36. *My Kingdom is not of this world.* Matth. xxviii. 18. *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying,*

All power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth: Matth. xxv. 34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father,----James iv. 12. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another? Rom. xiv. 4, 9. Who art thou that judgest another man's Servant:----- to his own master he standeth or falleth? For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

Those passages prove, not only the Sole Legislative Power of Christ as King and Head of his Church, but the *unlimited extent* of it to *all* affairs and concerns that are of a meer religious nature; He having *all power* in Heaven and Earth, over *all things*, and in *all things* to his Church, so as to allow *none* to be called their Master in Religion but himself. I cannot imagine, that any words can be more strong, clear, and expresse for confirming this point.

If Christ be the only Lawgiver to his Church, then it must be His SOLE prerogative to prescribe the Terms of their religious Communion, because the prescribing of those Terms is a plain and undoubted exercise of a proper Legislative power: and, it is impossible to exercise a power of enjoyning Terms of Communion, without a power of casting out of the Church such as decline the prescribed Terms; and, if any others, beside Christ, have this power, this absurd consequence will follow, that such persons are to be regarded as Kings and Lawgivers in Christ's Kingdom; and if so, Christ is not the Sole King in his Church, he is not the Sole Master of his own Family, He is not the Head in *all things*, and over *all things* to his Body the Church; but there must be as many Lords, Masters and Lawgivers in his Church, as there are Persons or Societys of men, that have a proper Authority and Power to give them

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new Terms of Religious Communion, which is very absurd; and it is the more so, because our Blessed Lord has expressly forbid it in his own Apostles, the prime Ministers of his Kingdom, *neither be ye called Masters: for one is your Master, even Christ*; and he expressly limits their Commission, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations,-----teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*; and accordingly they delivered nothing to the Church but what they had *received from the Lord Jesus Christ*, either immediately, or by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. They disclaimed all *Dominion over the faith* of Christians, and set up only for being *helpers of their joy* (2 Cor. ii. 24.). When they wrote to the Church at *Antioch* concerning Circumcision, they declared that what they did *seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them*, (Acts xv. 28.). They *preached Jesus Christ the Lord*, and *themselves the Servants*, (not Lords) *of the Churches for Jesus sake* (2 Cor. iv. 5.). The Apostle Peter lays all Christian Pastors under a Solemn Prohibition of being *Lords over God's heritage* (1 Pet. v. 3.). But Lords they are and must be, who can take in and turn out upon THEIR OWN Terms, and who are not satisfied with the Terms appointed by our Great Lord and Master. His gracious Terms of Communion are entirely and invariably settled in the Holy Scriptures, which are a perfect and Infallible Rule of Faith and Obedience. For, *all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works*. (2 Tim. iii. 17.). This do's quite supersede the necessity, nay it condemns the Imposition, of any new unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion; because such unscriptural Terms cannot be *good works*: for if they were

were good works, *the Man of God* could not be made perfect, could not be *thoroughly furnished to all good works*, by the Scripture. And, is it not a very unaccountable thing, that Religious Communion, which is both a religious Duty and a religious Priviledge, should be made to depend upon a Condition which is *no good work* at all; which is a meer human Invention, and so far from being a good work, that the Imposition of it, is derogatory from the Royal prerogative of Christ as our only Master, and from the perfection of the Holy Scriptures as the only Rule of our Religion. For which Reason, all the Laws and Canons of the Church, which impose those unscriptural Terms, are in themselves null and void; and Christians, from a zeal for the Royal Supremacy of Christ and the Perfection of his Laws, ought to treat them with the just disregard they deserve.

ARGUMENT II.

The Laws and Canons of a Church, which command *new and unscriptural* Terms of Religious Communion, have *no power* and authority over Conscience; and, therefore, they are a grievous encroachment on the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment. That they have *no power* over Conscience, I prove from this Essentiall protestant principle, *viz.* that the Bible is the only Rule of Faith and Christian Practice; and, therefore, the Laws and Canons enjoinning unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion can be *no rule* of either Faith or Christian Practice. The Consequence is plain to a Demonstration, unless we can swallow this gross contradiction, that there is an *only rule* of Faith and Practice, which is the BIBLE; and yet there is ANOTHER rule, beside the only rule, which is the Canons of the Church. If these same Canons be *no rule* of Faith and Christian Practice, they can have
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no power or authority over Conscience. For Conscience determines every man who do's it justice to conform himself, entirely, in the whole of Religion, to the will of God, who is the *only Lord of Conscience*; and, therefore the *meer will* of man is so far from having any authority over Conscience, that if it pays any regard to the will of man in its dictates and decisions, it deviates manifestly from it's only rule; and the sincerity of the man, thus influenced by meer human Authority, is *diminished* in proportion to the degree of *that* undue influence; which is of dangerous consequence to true Religion, by corrupting and debauching the Consciences of the Servants of Christ, and making them the *Servants of Men*. The Plea of Conscience is overruled by the Imposers of new and unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion. The excommunicating Canons, imposing them, leave no Salvo for the rights and free exercise of any man's Conscience. The Apostle *Paul* was, indeed, of another mind, Rom. xiv. i-----6, 14, 23. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not? and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's Servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth: Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there*
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is nothing unclean of it self : but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean-----and he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith : for whatsoever is not of faith, is Sin. Rom. xv. 7. Wherefore receive you one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God. Here the Inspired apostle forbiddeth all encroachments on the Rights of Conscience, by laying any authoritative injunction on the *Servants of another Master* to do any action, which they believe in their Consciences to be sinful ; and, at the same time gives such Characters of these Consciencious Christians as shows them to be acceptable to God, and justly entitled to the Charity and religious Communion of the faithful, even tho' the matter against which they have Consciencious Scruples should be in it self lawful and innocent ; which to *them* is *unclean*, because *they esteem* it to be unclean ; and because it is *not of faith*, and therefore Sinful in them to do it, and Sinful in all who would impose it on their Consciences, as a Term of Communion. And this clearly proves, that there ought to be no imposition of any new and unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion either upon Ministers or private Christians, because no imposing Person or Society has any power whatsoever over the Consciences of Christ's Servants ; who in all matters of Conscience, are accountable to none but to their *own* and their *only Master*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

ARGUMENT III.

The Imposers of new and unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion incur the guilt of SCHISM, and are chargeable with all the fatal Consequences of it. The claim and exercise of this Imposing Power has produced the greatest part of all the Schisms, Discord, and Animosities, that have disturbed the peace and unity of the Christian Church ; and has kindled most

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of the flames, that have raged in it, from the apostolical age down to our own times. St. Paul has given us a most elegant description of the mystical Body of Christ, from the Similitude of the Human Body, 1 Cor. xii. 12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ.* Having shewn the necessity and usefulness of all the Members, even the weakest, to the good of the whole, he says ver. 24. *but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be* NO SCHISM *in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.* He likewise applies the same Similitude, Ephes. iv. 15, 16. *But speaking the truth in Love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: From whom the whole Body fitly joyned together, and compacted by that whichevery joynt supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh encrease of the Body, unto the edifying of it self in love.* From these two passages of St. Paul's Epistles, we may learn the nature and evil of the Sin of Schism. It consists in an unnatural want of love, and of an affectionate care in some of the Members of Christ's body towards their fellow-members, which soon breaks out in unchristian animosities and contempt of them. What is opposed to Schism, is, that the members should take the same care one for another, and whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it: and, that every joint, every part of that one compacted body, should contribute towards the encrease and edification of the whole, by the good offices of fervent Charity, and brotherly Love; thus endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If these be the grand opposites of Schism, then the very Soul and essence of Schism must consist in treat-

ing the Members of the Body of Christ with such alienation of affection, with such neglect and contempt, as to judge them unworthy of the priviledges which belong to all it's members, or to all the members in the same particular stations in which they are placed in that Sacred Body, whether Pastors and Teachers, or private Christians; even tho' those despised members have complied with all the Terms and Conditions of Religious Communion, that are established by the Authority of their Great and only Lord and Master Jesus Christ. That (however it may recommend them to the Divine Approbation) will be no protection to them against the unmerciful ANATHEMAS, EXCOMMUNICATIONS, and DEPOSITIONS, inflicted on the faithful Servants of Christ by the Imposers of unscriptural Terms of Communion; what more can they do, what greater brand of Infamy can they put upon the most notorious Drunkards, Adulterers, Murderers, Blasphemers, or the most impious profane wretches! the natural consequence is, that those censures expose the very best of men to unchristian popular odium, promoted and encreased by the uncharitable imposers and all their abettors, who industriously run down the meek and charitable, who find themselves obliged by the Laws of Christ to do justice to the Conduct and Characters of the injur'd Sufferers. A wide door is opened to the vilest calumny and detraction, to strife and envy, the plentiful parent of *Confusion and every evil work*. Is this the *same care the members should have one for another*; to cut them off from the body, and to hinder them from doing the proper work incumbent on them, for the *encrease and edification of the Body in Love*! Wherever this Imposing Power prevails, it must perpetuate contention, and effectually destroy peace and unity; the very centre and basis of which, is a close adherence to all the scriptural Terms of Communion,

on, without any human addition or diminution. This would remove all the Rents and Schisms, which now subsist in the Church of God, and pluck them up by the very roots.

ARGUMENT IV.

Superstition is chargeable upon the conduct of those, who impose new and unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion, which I prove thus. To lay an *undue stress* upon *meerly human* Terms of Religious Communion, so as to believe, and lead others to believe, that Conformity to these human Inventions is pleasing to the Deity, and that Non-Conformity to them is displeasing to the Deity, is truly Superstitious: But the Imposers of unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion do lay an undue Stress upon their unscriptural Terms, by believing and leading others to believe, &c. Therefore, they are guilty of Superstition. If I prove these *Premises*, the Conclusion will be undeniable.

The first of these *Premises* is clear. For nothing can be pleasing to God but what he has commanded in his Law. And nothing can be displeasing to him but what is sinful. For *Sin is a transgression of the Law*. And, *where there is no Law, there is no transgression*. But conformity to unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion is not commanded in any Divine Law; and to say that it is, is a contradiction in terms; and therefore it cannot be pleasing to the Deity. Non-Conformity to unscriptural Terms of Communion is no where forbidden; therefore, it cannot be a Sin, and consequently cannot provoke His wrath. From all which it clearly follows, that to believe the Favour and Displeasure of God are annexed to the compliance or non-compliance with the imposed unscriptural Terms of Communion, is *laying too great a Stress* upon them, and amounts to gross Superstition. For it fills the mind with a panic, a slavish horror of the Deity (the very Soul of Superstition)

as if he were a Tyrannical Being, inclined to an arbitrary capricious way of punishing men, for what his Law has made no crime. Far be it from the Righteous Governor of the world, to deal so with his Intelligent Creatures. It is great presumption in men to pretend to a power of making *new Dutys*, and *Sins*; which is in effect to make a *new Religion*, and to make the Favour and Displeasure of God to depend upon their fond conceits. This was the Superstition of the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom our Saviour said (Matth. xv. 9.). *In vain do you worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of men.*

To prove, that the Imposers of unscriptural Terms of Communion lay an undue Stress upon these uncommanded Terms, by believing, and leading others to believe, that Conformity to their Impositions is pleasing, and that Non-Conformity to them is displeasing to God, I refer my Readers to their known Topicks of argument, for their pressing the *one* and disuading from the *other*. They urge, with great vehemence, that Non-Conformity to their Canons, imposing these human Terms of Communion, do's greatly disturb and break the peace and unity of the Church, which is a very great Sin; and that it involves the Non-Conformists in the guilt of Schism, which is a *damnable Sin*, highly displeasing to God. This is a very false Judgment they form of the practice of Conscientious non-Conformity to *their* Terms: for I have shown, in my *third argument*, that the disturbing and breaking the peace & unity of the Church, together with the guilt of Schism, and the perpetuating of Schism and division, is *wholly chargeable* on the principles and practice of the Imposers, and *not at all* on the principles of those who, for the honour of Christ as the Sole King and Lawgiver to his Church, refuse all Subjection to the imposing Power. But tho' their judgment of the matter be a very important Error; yet in fact, they do form such a Judgment: and in doing so, they believe and lead others to believe, that the Favour & Displeasure of God depend on obedience

obedience or disobedience to meer Human Canons enjoyn-
ing matters in Religion, which Christ hath never required
from any of his Subjects. This is, in my humble opinion,
a plain instance of Superstition; and, therefore, *no un-*
scriptural Terms of Communion ought to be imposed,
upon any pretence whatsoever.

ARGUMENT V.

The giving offence is a great Sin, and of dangerous
consequence to the Souls of the offended. But a claim
of Power to Impose new and unscriptural Terms of Com-
munion involves the Imposers in the guilt of command-
ing men to give offence; and, therefore, the claim of such
a power can never be just. St. Paul describes the Sin,
and the evil of *giving offence*, and gives directions against
it in two remarkable Passages; the first is, Rom. xiv. 13,
15, 20, 21. *Let us not therefore judge one another any
more, but judge rather that no man put a stumbling block
or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. But if thy
brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not
charitably; destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ
died. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things,
indeed, are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth
with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink
wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or
is offended, or is made weak.* The Jewish Converts, who
thought the distinction of meats and days, made in the
Law of Moses, ought to be continued under the Christian
Dispensation, censured and judged their Christian Bre-
thren who thought the contrary, and were ready to for-
sake Christianity it self on that account; or, if they
continued in the profession of it, were tempted by the
example of their fellow-Christians to eat with a *doubt-*
ing Conscience, or against their Conscience, which was
destructive of their Sincerity, and pernicious to their
Souls; and, therefore, no such stumbling block ought to
be

be laid in their way. The same Apostle dissuadeth earnestly from eating things sacrificed to Idols, least it should lead men into the abominable Sin of Idolatry, 1 Cor. viii. 4, 7,-----13. *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in Sacrifice unto Idols, we know that an Idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one-----Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with Conscience of the Idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an Idol; and their Conscience being weak, is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols Temple, shall not the Conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to Idols: and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the Brethren, and wound their weak Conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, least I make my brother to offend.* Here we see, that offence may be given in the practice of things, which in their own nature are lawful and innocent; and which become evil and ruinous to the Souls of men, meerly through the ignorance and weakness of those to whom the offence is given; and that in all such cases, we ought to abstain from the offensive action.

To apply all this reasoning to the claim of power to impose unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion; let it be considered, that the constant plea of all Imposers, is, that the matters they impose are, at least, Lawful and Innocent; and that the Rulers of the Church are the proper Judges of their usefulness and expediency; and where they impose nothing but what is in its own nature

Law-

Lawful, all Christians ought to obey them. But, I humbly conceive, the Apostle has given it against the Rulers, in both the passages I have quoted from his Inspired Writings. For in two cases, *viz.* eating what the Jews thought unlawful, tho' it was in it self lawful; and eating in the Idol's Temple meat offered to the Idol, which was in it self, abstracting from the circumstances St. Paul describes, innocent; He charges the eating in both cases with a heinous Sin, in causing the *weak brother to perish for whom Christ died*, and calls it a *Sinning against Christ* himself. It is impossible for human wisdom to foresee what cases, and how many may happen of the like nature; and, therefore, the wisdom and goodness of Christ appear, in leaving all such cases to be judged by every Christian as they occur, and in forbidding all Christians to give Laws, and to fix terms of religious Communion not appointed by himself. It will be a poor excuse at the Tribunal of the Great Judge, for destroying the Souls of our Brethren, that we did it according to the Laws of the Church.

I think my self obliged, for the honour of our Holy Religion, to mention two flagrant instances of *giving offence*, in the Scriptural Sense of that phrase, chargeable on the Majority of protestant Churches, on account of their Impositions of new and unscriptural Terms of religious Communion. *One* is the hardening of Papists in their adherence to the Idolatry, Superstition, and Tyranny which make up so great a part of their Religion, and the giving them an handle for deluding protestants into their Communion. *The other* is, a leading of our Modern Infidels, commonly called Deists, into a very bad opinion of Christianity; furnishing them with materials for poysoning the minds of Young Noblemen and Gentlemen with their wild notions, who are too ready to imbibe them, and to fall off from Christianity.

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As to the first, he must be a stranger to the popish writers against the protestant cause, who do's not know, that they turn the unscriptural Impositions of the protestants into matter of reproach against their Religion. The papists naturally retort the protestant arguments, and turn them against protestants themselves, to this purpose. "Gentlemen, your great principle, upon which you have separated from the Church of *Rome*, is, that you have the Rights of Conscience and Private Judgment secured to you by PROTESTANTISM, which were trampled upon and insulted by *Rome*, who had no just Authority to impose any thing upon you but what you could find in the Bible. Upon this principle you left us ; but as soon as you met with any differences among yourselves in Religion, you set up Rulers in your pretended Churches, who soon found it necessary to impose many terms of religious Communion upon you, of which there is not a shadow in the Bible. You pretend to give all your Clergy and Laity a free Liberty of Searching the Scriptures, and judging for themselves of all the Decrees, Doctrines and Canons established by General Councils, or any other persons whatsoever that were not inspired ; but then, if any of them shall affirm any Article of your Creeds to be false, or any Canon of your Churches, or forms of your worship to be superstitious, you order him to be excommunicated ; hence a long train of bitter Schisms, Parties, and Sects are to be found among you ; and, all upon the principle on which you forsook our Communion ; and, when you would compose these divisions among yourselves, you find a necessity of resuming the principle you renounced ; you then use the *Same Authority against one another*, which you would not allow in us ; with this difference only, that our decisions are Infallible, and therefore the more consistent and effectual for suppressing Heresy, and Schism, than yours ; and, you must be sensible of this
your-

yourselfes: for you come as near us in Infallibility as you can with any decency; for tho' you *call your selves fallible*, blaming us for pretending to be infallible, yet you NEVER ERR; and the difference is so very small between being INFALLIBLE, and NEVER ERRING, that we may easily compromise the matter; you had better come back to us again; for you'l be much the surer of your NEVER ERRING, that you return into the bosom of an Infallible Church, that CAN NEVER ERR. " By these delusive reasonings, the Man of Sin, and his votaries harden themselves in their Antichristian Impositions, and upbraid many of the protestant Churches with the inconsistency of their Principles and conduct, in bearing hard upon the Consciences of one another by a claim of Authority, which (to speak the plain truth) themselves will never be able to justify, nor reconcile to the Principles of the REFORMATION. Thus have they verified the judicious Remark of the memorable Mr. Hales, who (in his *Golden Remains*, *Serm.* on 2 Pet. iii. 16.) says, 'when we receded from the Church of Rome, one motive was, because she added unto Scripture her Glosses as Canonical, to supply what the plain Text of Scripture could not yield. If in the place of hers, we set up our own Glosses, thus to do were nothing else, but to pull down Baal, and set up an Ephod; to run round, and meet the Church of Rome again, in the same point in which at first we left her'. It is in the power of the Reformed Churches to remove this stumbling-block, and to open their Communion to all Sincere Christians, and to all faithful Pastors and Teachers, according to the Rules of the Gospel. O! for that blessed day, which shall drive away every degree of the spirit and dregs of popery out of all the Churches, which bear the protestant Name; to the Terror of BABYLON THE GREAT, and the joy of all honest protestant hearts!

The other flagrant Instance of *giving offence*, by the Imposition of unscriptural Terms of Communion, is, that it

exposes Christianity it self to the sneer and ridicule of our Modern Infidels, the *Deists*. They Look thro' the Christian World, and the several Churches, and observe that Christianity appears with a new face, and in a new dress almost in every Country. What passes for *pure orthodoxy* in one place, proves *rank heresy* in another; what the people in *one Church* call pure worship, in *another* they brand with Idolatry and Superstition. In one sort of Church there is an Infallible Judge of Controversy, whom no man dare contradict under high penalties; in another, fallible men enforce their interpretations by authority, and censure their fellow-Christians for not believing what, after the best enquiry they can make, they are *not able* to believe. Surely, *say they*, if the rule of this religion were from God, an infinitely wise and a good Being, it wou'd have been expressed in such plain and intelligible Language, as men of good sense and application could not be at such a loss about the true meaning of it, as to be perpetually fighting and devouring one another about it. The learned Compilers and Imposers of these Interpretations do, *all of them severally*, father their respective Schemes on the *Holy Ghost*; tho' it is impossible they should come from Him, because they contain glaring contradictions to one another, and absurd Notions of the Deity (as the *Deists* suppose) unworthy of his Moral Perfections & Government. They observe many trifling insignificant things tacked to this Religion, as great decorations and ornaments of it, imposed upon penalty of Non-Communion; which, being Theatrical and below the Gravity of a wise man, are utterly unworthy of being presented to the God of Heaven as pleasing service to Him; who cannot be supposed to delight in human excursions of Luxuriant Fancy, nor to have empowered men to STAMP a religious NECESSITY upon meer TRIFLES, by their Arbitrary Decrees: upon these prejudices, they conclude the whole to be meer Priestcraft.

Solid answers have been given to these Cavils, by the Christian *Apologists*. But alas! the prejudices from the Imposing

posing Power stick so deep, and have given such a wound to the Christian Cause, that nothing would tend so effectually to heal it, as to take *THIS Stumbling-block* out of the way of those who are ready to fall by it. While the Religion of Christ is dressed up in a fool's coat, and made any thing the Imposers please to make it, it is easy to see what will be the consequence. It is so bedaub'd with the dross of human invention, and with *authoritative explanations* of fallible assuming mortals, that it will cost men some pains to get a thorough view of what it truly was, when it made it's first appearance in the world. Strip it of all the *Appendages* and *Supplements*, of all the *Glosses* put upon it by meer human authority, it will shine in it's native beauty; it will appear, then, to be the most amiable display of the Divine Perfections that ever was laid before the world. All it's Doctrines, Precepts, and Institutions will then appear to be an admirable System; and, nothing in the whole but what is worthy of it's Great Author, and tends entirely to the happiness of mankind.

ARGUMENT. VI.

If any Sett of uninspired men have a Right to impose upon us new and unscriptural Terms of Religious Communion, they will have a Right to destroy the whole of our Christian Liberty, tho' we have a divine Command to *stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*, and forbid to be *entangled again with a yoke of bondage*. (Gal. v. 1.). It could never be the intention of our blessed Saviour to free the *Jews* from the yoke of the Ceremonial Law, that had once the Sanction of Divine Authority, and to leave his Servants to the unbounded Licence of Church-Rulers, who might impose upon them a more grievous Yoke than it ever was; which was the condition of the Church in *Augustine's* time. He never designed, that men should be empowered to make any

thing necessary, which He had left indifferent : for that would have been a design to render the *Liberty*, wherein he hath commanded us to *stand fast*, wholly precarious.

This is evident from our Saviours condemning the *traditions of the Elders*, who imposed many things, not prescribed in the law of *Moses*, or in any part of the old Testament. The learned Dr. *Whitby*, in his Commentary on *Matth. xv. 2.* and *xxiii. 8.* hath given a most surprising account, from *Maimonides*, and other *Jewish* writers, of these *Traditions*, which were imposed as Terms of Communion. From him I have extracted the following Passages. ‘ Their CANON saith, whosoever despiseth the
‘ washing of hands is worthy to be excommunicated----
‘ and *Buxtorf* citeth from their TALMUD this Expression,
‘ that he that eats bread with unwashen hands *do’s as bad*
‘ *as if he lay with a Whore.* And they say, *Rabbi Eleazar*
‘ *Ben Hazar* was excommunicated by the SANHEDRIM,
‘ because he contemned the washing of Hands.----They
‘ held it as a thing necessary, because say they, the words
‘ of the Scribes are lovely *above the words of the Law*,
‘ and more weighty than the words of the Law, or the
‘ Prophets. *Maimonides* saith, This is a matter of the *high-*
‘ *est Sanctity*, and the way of the highest Religion ; name-
‘ ly, that a man separate himself, and go aside from the
‘ vulgar, and that he neither *touch them, nor eat, or drink*
‘ *with them*-----The SANHEDRIM did twenty four
‘ times excommunicate those who gave not the honour of
‘ a Master to their RABBIES-----R. *Eliazer* saith,
‘ that he who separates from the School of his RABBI,
‘ or teacheth *any thing* which he hath not heard from his
‘ Master, *provokes* the Divine Majesty to depart from *Is-*
‘ *rael*.-----MAIMONIDES saith, that he that will be
‘ holy, must perform the words of the Fathers ; and, they
‘ declare that the words of *Cabbala*, or the *Traditions of*
‘ *their Fathers*, were equal to the words of the Law, and
‘ *more to be regarded* than the words of the Prophets ; that

' a Prophet was not to be believed, except he cou'd shew
 ' a Sign, or a Miracle; but as for those Elders, or Fa-
 ' thers, they were to be believed without them; it being
 ' said of them, DEUT. xvii. 2. *According to the Sentence*
 ' *of the Law which they shall teach thee, and according to*
 ' *the Judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do.*
 ' MAIMONIDES saith, if a thousand Prophets, who were e-
 ' qual to *Elias* and *Elisba*, bring ONE INTERPRETATION,
 ' and a thousand and one wise men produce ONE CON-
 ' TRARY to it, we must encline to the MOST, and be
 ' obliged rather to act according to the Sentence of
 ' these wise men, than that of the thousand Prophets.---
 ' And even *Josephus* saith, that they who were of the
 ' *Pharisees*, followed their Guide, and thought it necessary
 ' to observe and contend for *whatsoever he would command.*
 Now, if our Saviour condemns all those Traditions of
 the Jewish Elders, as destitute of Divine Authority, we
 must conclude, that no meer Human Power ought to
 impose any new Terms of Communion on Christians.
 For the Law of Christ says, COLOSS. ii. 20, 22.---
Why are ye subject to Ordinances.-----after the Doc-
trines and Commandments of men: whence it follows, that
 all ordinances in Religion, which are after the Doctrines
 and Commandments of men, ought to be rejected; that
 no Subjection is due, or ought to be paid to the Imposing
 power that commands them. This is very clearly ex-
 pressed by the same Apostle, GAL. ii. 3, 4, 5. But nei-
 ther Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compel-
 led to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren
 unawares brought in, who came in privily to spie out our
 Liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might
 bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection
 on no not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might
 continue with you.

Against the first Proposition you advance FOUR excep-
 tions; the FIRST is contained in these words (P. 7).

‘ 1. I say the Proposition is artfully general and reserved
 ‘ no Protestant it’s true, will deny that all the terms of
 ‘ religious Communion, are in the general sufficiently
 ‘ fixed in the Holy Scriptures: but this is a general with-
 ‘ out any particulars, and very often the old saying hold
 ‘ true, *viz. Dolus latet in generalibus*, i. e. there is often
 ‘ a snare in meer generals, without mentioning any parti-
 ‘ culars, comprehended under them. Our blessed Lord
 ‘ has not in a meer general way, fixed the necessary Terms
 ‘ of religious Communion in his Word, but has particu-
 ‘ larized them so plainly, that it must be a fault in any
 ‘ Christian Society, if they be not as plain and particu-
 ‘ lar in owing the necessary Things of Christianity, as he
 ‘ is in recommending them, in his Holy Scriptures; I say
 ‘ if he has fixed the particular Terms of his Communion,
 ‘ any Church is to blame, who doth not fix those Terms
 ‘ of Communion as particularly as he doth; but leave
 ‘ them unfixed altogether, excepting one general condi-
 ‘ tion of Communion, *viz.* that it be believed that they are
 ‘ determined by our Blessed Saviour the New Testament.

ANSW. I do not understand the meaning of our *fixing*
the terms of Communion as particularly as Christ hath
done. The fixing of those Terms is an act of the Sup-
 ‘ preme Authority of Christ, and do’s not belong to any
 ‘ Church; the duty of the Church is to comply with the
 ‘ Terms Christ hath fixed, for that very reason, because
 ‘ Christ hath fixed them very *plainly and particularly*, as you
 ‘ acknowledge. Can we do this work better? can we
 ‘ do it more plainly and more particularly than He has
 ‘ done it for us? Blessed be the Lord Jesus, who was
 ‘ *faithful in all his house as a Son*, who hath given us Laws,
 ‘ not to be amended but to be obeyed.

But what seems to disturb you, is, (and perhaps that
 ‘ is what you mean by our *leaving the Terms unfixed*)
 ‘ that no one is the wiser by this proposition, what are
 ‘ the particular Important Doctrines and Precepts, which
 ‘ are

are made necessary to religious Communion by Jesus Christ ' and here you enumerate a great many Scripture-Doctrines not included in the Proposition. ANSW. Had we intended an enumeration of all the Doctrines, and Precepts made necessary to Communion by Jesus Christ, your objection would have been unanswerable. But our design is so clearly expressed in the words which go *immediately before* the propositions, as to demonstrate to all men of Common Sense, that we had nothing of that kind in our view. Our *first Expedient* for peace is founded on the Gospel-Precepts which enjoyn forbearance, notwithstanding of differences in Judgment and Practice in lesser matters; which precepts, as we apprehend, do not allow of a Breach of Communion between our Brethren and us, upon any of our present debates; for supporting this opinion, we say, (NARRATIVE, P. 185.). ' to justify this Expedient, it will be necessary that *our Judgment and practice with relation to the Points in debate* ' between the *Subscribers* and us be *clearly stated*; otherwise it will be impossible to judge whether the Gospel-Precepts, enjoying Christian forbearance, be applicable ' to our case. The following propositions contain a clear ' and full account of our Sentiments upon *these Heads*. Then follow the *Six Propositions*. If these propositions contain a clear and full account of our sentiments of the points in debate, they answer the end we had in laying them before the Synod; tho' they give no list of Christ's Terms of Communion. And had we inserted in the FIRST, or in any of the SIX, the Scripture-Doctrines and Precepts you mention, we must have plainly told the world a most Notorious and Calumnious Lie, *viz.* that all these Scripture-Doctrines and Precepts you mention were denied by the *Subscribers*, that the *Non-Subscribers* were in danger of being cast out of the Synod for holding them, and were obliged to sue for forbearance in their profession of them. And, yet you do not stop to
accuse

accuse us of not doing, what wou'd have been an intolerable scandalous practice in us to have done. Upon this same groundless foundation, you infuse into the prejudiced minds of the populace, a vile jealousy of the reason of our not inserting the plainest Truths in our Propositions, in those remarkable words (P. 8, 9.) ' and if the *Belfast* ' Society had been so particular in their *Formula*, as to ' have secured the Apostle's Creed, and the ten Com- ' mandments, and, the Lords Prayer, in the terms of ' their Communion, it might have been a good step towards ' allaying our uneasy differences ' ANSW. These words want no Commentary. The calumnious Sting with which they are poisoned, and the innocence of the defamed, must be apparent to all Impartial Judges. Lord pity the poor Soul that is capable of such a turn of thinking ! and the poor people under his care !

Your Second Exception against the first proposition stands thus (P. 9.) ' This proposition I think, is self- ' inconsistent. For if it be taken in conjunction with the ' other five, it condemns the Imposition of any Creed or ' Confession of Faith, by any set of uninspired men, as ' necessary Terms of Religious Communion. Yet at the ' same time, they the *Belfast*-Society, a set of uninspired ' men, impose these six propositions both on themselves ' and others ' ANSW. In our Expedients for peace, we deny in the strongest terms the fact, which you take upon you to averr with the greatest confidence, viz. that we *impose the Six propositions* : For there we say, (NARRATIVE, P. 194) ' did we ever impose, or attempt to ' impose upon the Faith and Conscience of any of our ' Hearers or Brethren our *own opinions* in the present ' controversies, and insist upon their assent to them, as the ' Term and Condition of our Communion with them ? It will be an easy task to find Self-inconsistency in any proposition you please, if you dare allow yourself the Liberty (as you have done in this case) of palming up-

on it's author a sentiment, disclaimed by himself in the most open candid manner. The Impartial world will distinguish between *Argument* and *Fiction*. A very poor saving you have for your averment; *viz.* that 'the *Belfast-Society*, in *some degree*, impose their 'propositions on others; for they publish their Six 'propositions on purpose to advertize all other Christian Societies, upon what Terms, they, the *Belfast-Society*, are ready to keep Communion with them, *viz.* that 'said Society must be indulged in a fixed and inflexible 'adherence to their Six propositions.' ANSW. I believe you have the honour of being the FIRST, and the ONLY Author (so far as I know) that has taken an earnest desire of being *indulged*, in a Conscientious profession of religious principles, for an *Imposition* of those very principles, upon the men from *whom* they ask only to be *indulged*. Had we told the Synod, that they must embrace our Scheme of *Non-Subscription*, otherwise we would Separate from their Communion, the charge of inconsistency with our principles, and of our being the Imposers, would have been exceeding just. But this was so far from being the case, that we continued in Communion with the Synod, under the greatest discouragements from ill treatment for divers years, until the SYNOD THEMSELVES made the SCHISM by casting us out of their Body. From this incontestable Fact, joyned with their own authentic and unanimous Declarations, it appears plainly, that your charge against us is *false* and *injurious*. And, you are the more inexcusable in publishing such a Charge, because the Truth you contradict is so obvious to your view, and so level to the meanest Capacity, that you could not miss seeing it, had you been at any pains to inform yourself; and, because this *gross Mistake* of yours do's not seem to be a transient slip of the pen; but a Laboured point, to serve a turn. For, to place the Presbytery of *Antrim* in a ridiculous Light, you

make them *avowedly take up the Trade of Creed-making*; the *Six propositions*, are *their Creed*; which they *impose as necessary Terms of Communion*, both on themselves and others: And to show that their Creed is a very lame defective one, it *wants the very Essentials of Christianity*. This *dirty work* may, perhaps, pass for *orthodoxy*, with the vulgar, who are too ready to take things upon Trust; but when it comes to be examined by men of Sense, it must give them pleasure to find, that *none of the Essentials of Christianity* were controverted in the *Northern Synods*; and, to show this, is the principal end of inserting the *SIX PROPOSITIONS* in our *Expedients for Peace*; and, what you reckon a *defect* in them is really an *Excellence*; and, for that very reason, they can with *no propriety* be called *our Creed*; they were not drawn, nor ever calculated, with a design to give an Abridgment of the Christian Religion, but only to state our own opinions on particular heads of Controversy, which we acknowledge and avow as *Extraessential points*; pleading that, by the Rules of the Gospel, such as believe them are the proper objects of *Christian forbearance*. To call propositions, that were formed for an end inconsistent with the true end of a *Creed*, and that were *never imposed*, nor *intended to be imposed*; to call such propositions, I say, *our Creed*, is to speak in Terms unknown to any Correct writer; and has a tendency to deceive your Readers, tho' I hope you have no such intention.

Your *third* and *fourth* Exceptions against the *first* proposition will be fully considered, when I come to the defence of the *third* proposition, to which they more properly belong. I proceed to

A D E F E N C E of the

S E C O N D P R O P O S I T I O N.

The Truth of this proposition (which the Reader

will

will find P. 6.) is proved by two plain Arguments.

ARG. I. Men of Education and Learning, who have devoted themselves to the study of the Scriptures, not only with a view to their own practice as Christians, but in order to teach others as pastors of the Christian Church, may know the will of God, without subscribing an imposed Human Confession. If such men are capable of knowing the will of God, cannot they, by a gift of *utterance* and *wisdom* express their sentiments upon the points they know, in such terms as will sufficiently prove that their knowledge and belief of Divine Matters is founded on the holy Scriptures; in other words, that they are *found in the faith*. Are they not able without subscribing such Imposed Forms, to preach good sermons; showing in their *Doctrine, uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech which cannot be condemned*? And, all men who are able to preach the Gospel in the manner in which it ought to be preached, have likewise sufficient knowledge and ability to give a plain and just account of the Doctrines, Precepts, Institutions, and all the parts of it; and to digest their knowledge of them in such an easy and natural method and in such proper terms, as may give clear and sufficient evidence of their *soundness in the Faith*. The latter is just as possible as the former. If so, the proposition is true.

ARG. II. The *actual Existence* of any thing is the shortest and clearest *demonstration* that can be given of it's *possibility*. Now, the case in question admits of *this* kind of demonstration. During the Apostolical age, none that were ordained to the Holy Ministry, were obliged to Subscribe any *human exclusive Test* of their orthodoxy. In *that age*, there was no such Test in Being. Happy had it been for the Christian world, for the Interests of Truth, of Peace, of true Piety, and of Charity, if every succeeding age had copyed after so worthy an Example; a thing, which

the Christians of the *second* and *third* Centuries had the peculiar honour of doing. For we do not learn from Church-History, that there was any such *Exclusive human Creed* before the Council of *Nice*, in the *fourth* Century. All Christians are agreed, that the *three first* ages were the purest times of the Christian Church; and, consequently, their Candidates for the Ministry *did give* clear and sufficient evidence of their *soundness in the faith*. At this day, the Church of *GENEVA* impose no such Exclusive Forms of Confession. The case of the famous *Monfieur Vial* gave occasion to the abolishing of them. Candidates are ordained among the protestant Dissenters in *England*, upon Confessions *composed* by the Candidates *themselves*, many whereof have been published to the world; the like practice has constantly obtained in the *old Presbytery* of *Dublin*, and among their Brethren in the *South of Ireland*. And, before the year 1705, there was no Imposition of the *Westminster-Confession*; or of any other exclusive Test, amongst the *Presbyterians* in the *North of Ireland*. All these Instances prove, that the Case, put in the second proposition, is *possible*, because it is *Fact*.

Your remark on *this* proposition, is in these words (P. 14.) 'this proposition hath almost nothing in it but *May-Bees*, and therefore much need not be said in answer to it, till it's compilers shall favour us with the addition 'of one *must be*' ANSW. All that we assert in this proposition, is the possibility of a case therein mentioned, *viz.* that *Candidates may give clear and sufficient evidence of their soundness in the faith*, without subscribing, &c. If this be possible, as I have proved it is, the proposition is true. And, it not only *may be*, but it *MUST BE* true; and the necessary Consequence of it, is, that there *must be* NO NECESSITY for any exclusive Test of orthodoxy in the case supposed; because Candidates may sufficiently prove their

their orthodoxy without IT. This SECOND proposition is a step toward the proof of the THIRD.

You find fault with our Illustration of the matter, 'in the Conclusion of *this* proposition, wherein we say, 'and they' (the Candidates) 'may as fully satisfy their ordainers concerning their fitness to preach the Christian faith, without subscribing any such Confession, as they may prove their aptness to preside in the public worship of God, without declaring their assent to any prescribed *human Liturgy or form of prayer*' this you call a *running a rigid parallel between set forms of prayer, and set forms of Creeds*. And you attempt to show a great disparity between them. ANSW. The two cases are a rigid parallel. For we may *Confess our Faith*, according to the will of God, and show our soundness in the Faith, without subscribing any *imposed Human Form* of Faith. And, we may worship God, according to his will, and shew our fitness to preside in the public worship, without the use or approbation of any *imposed Human Liturgy*. Neither the *one* nor the *other* is necessary, by the Law of Christ. And he that pleads for the necessity of *either*, must, if he acts agreeable to his own principle, allow the necessity of *both*. And, therefore, our principle against *all unscriptural* Terms of Communion do's equally oblige us to reject BOTH. And your principle, which makes you so zealous for *Human Confessions*, do's equally oblige you to Conform to *Human Liturgies*; tho' you don't see it. I proceed to

A D E F E N C E of the T H I R D P R O P O S I T I O N.

The *third proposition* (which the Reader is desired to peruse, P. 7.) is proved by this

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A Subscription to the *Westminster-Confession of Faith*, or to *any one* uninspired Confession, *imposed* as the *Sole and Exclusive Test and Standard of orthodoxy* and *Term of Ministerial Communion*, is a *New* and *unscriptural Term of Communion* : Therefore, by the *first proposition*, it ought not to be Imposed. In order to a clear and satisfactory proof, that the Subscription I mention is a *new* and *unscriptural* Term of Communion, I shall lay before the Reader, in one view, all the Canons and Laws of the *General Synods of Ulster*, imposing the Subscription against which my Argument is pointed.

The *first* of these Acts or Canons, was made in 1705 : But it being repeated in the very next Act they made, the Reader will find it in the Act made 1720, commonly called the *PACIFIC ACT*, in these words (*NARRATIVE P. 2, 3.*) ‘ WHEREAS there has been a Surmise
‘ of a Design to lay aside the *Westminster-Confession* of
‘ Faith, and our *larger* and *shorter* Catechisms : We
‘ of this Synod do unanimously declare, that none of us
‘ have or had such a Design, but on the contrary, as
‘ we still adhere to the said Confession and Catechisms,
‘ so we do earnestly recommend to all under our Care to
‘ have in their Custody and carefully peruse them, and
‘ to train up their Children in the Knowledge of them;
‘ and if any have spoken disrespectfully or tending to
‘ disparage them, we strictly forbid any such thing to
‘ be done for the future, and that our people shou’d be
‘ assured of this as the unanimous Judgment of this Synod,
‘ for removing all Jealousies they have had of any Per-
‘ sons on that Account : And we heartily recommend
‘ and enjoin the said Confession (as being a very good
‘ Abridgment of the Christian Doctrines contain’d in
‘ the Sacred Scriptures) to be observed according to an
‘ Act of the General Synod in the Year 1705. Which Act
‘ is as follows [*That such who are to be licenc’d to preach*
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' the Gospel of Christ, subscribe the Westminster-Confession of
 ' Faith to be the Confession of their Faith, and promise to ad-
 ' here to the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government
 ' of this Church; as also those who are licenc'd and have
 ' not subscrib'd, be oblig'd to subscribe before their being or-
 ' dain'd amongst us, which was voted and unanimously ap-
 ' prov'd.] Which is thus to be understood, as now is
 ' practis'd by the Presbyteries, that if any Person call'd
 ' upon to subscribe, shall scruple any Phrase or Phrases
 ' in the Confession, he shall have Leave to use his own
 ' Expressions; which the Presbytery shall accept of, pro-
 ' viding they judge such a Person sound in the Faith,
 ' and that such Expressions are consistent with the Sub-
 ' stance of the Doctrine; and that such Explications shall
 ' be inserted in the Presbytery-books; and that this be a
 ' Rule, not only in Relation to Candidates licenc'd by
 ' ourselves, but to all Intrants into the Ministry among
 ' us, tho' they have been licenc'd or ordain'd elsewhere'.
 In the year 1721, they made *three Imposing Acts*, in
 the following words (NARRATIVE P. 54, 55.) For
 ' making the *Pacific-Act* more effectual, and securing
 ' the Peace of this Church, it was overtured, *first*, that
 ' if there be any Protest entered by any one Minister,
 ' against the Licencing, Ordaining or Installing any
 ' Candidate or Minister; in that case, the Proceedings
 ' of that Presbytery in that Affair shall cease, untill the
 ' Meeting of next General Synod.

' *Overture second*, THAT no Person be Licenced or
 ' Installed, without the Concurrence of two thirds of
 ' the Ministers of the Presbytery then present, and if
 ' there be an odd Minister in the Presbytery, he shall
 ' be added to the two Thirds.

' *Overture third*, If the *Pacific-Act* be violated in
 ' the manner of Licencing, Ordaining or Installing any
 ' Person, the Minister who shall preside in the Licenc-
 ' ing, Ordaining or Installing such Person, shall be sus-
 ' pended

‘ pended at the Discretion of the subsequent Synod. All these Overtures were voted and approved by this Synod.’

In the year 1722, they declare in these words ‘ This Synod *resolves* most FIRMLY and CONSTANTLY to adhere to the *Westminster*-Confession of Faith, as being founded on the word of God, and agreeable thereunto ’ and they further say that ‘ they adhere to the *Westminster*-Confession of faith as a *Test of orthodoxy*.’

In the year 1725, they explain the PACIFIC ACT, enforcing it with penalties of an extraordinary nature, in those words. (NARRATIVE P. 140, 141.) ‘ That where- as the pacific Act has been by some Interpreted to indulge Intrants into the Ministry, in scrupling some Doctrines as well as *Phrases* in our Confession of Faith ; that it be therefore Resolved by the Synod, that no Presbytery shall be allowed to interpret said Act in such a Latitude, which we believe is not agreeable to the Sense of the Synod in 1720, nor to the Words in which said Act is express’d ; and if any Intrans shall scruple any Doctrine or Doctrines of our Confession, that the Presbytery to which he belongs shall not proceed to License, Ordain or Instal him until the General Synod shall have an opportunity of judging the Affair, and the Scruples of any Candidate against any Proposition or Propositions in our Confession be Transmitted to the several Presbyteries, that all may have their deliberate Thoughts of them against the time of the Synod’s Meeting ; and that any Candidate who is to be Licensed or Ordained, shall be called upon, by the Presbytery to which he is Subject, to subscribe the Confession of Faith, when he delivers his first Piece of Tryal, whether first or second Tryals, or before he be Ordained ; but if notwithstanding, any Presbytery shall License, Ordain, or Instal ANY INTRANS contrary to the above Act, as now Explained and Limit-

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ted, that the Moderator of the Presbytery Licensing; the Minister Presiding in Ordaining, or Installing, shall incur the Censure of Suspension for a Year, and the Person Licensed shall be Silenced, and the Intransigent Ordained or Installed shall be DEPOSED, by any particular or General Synod which shall happen first.

The last *Scene* of this *Tragedy* was opened in the Fatal Rupture made in the Synod, by their exclusion of the NON-SUBSCRIBERS from synodical Communion, in the year 1726. This woful division, which had been a ripening, thro' the various steps of it's progress, for divers years, appeared now in an OPEN SCHISM, created by *their* vote, approving the following overture. (NARRATIVE p. 228, 229.) 'The Committee, appointed by the *subscribing* Body, having seriously Considered the PROPOSITIONS offer'd by the Non-subscribers, do observe, that *some of the Principles* contained in these Propositions are everfive of the Pacific-Act, several other important Resolutions of the General Synod, and the known Principles of our Constitution, which we believe are founded upon and agreeable to the Laws of the Gospel, as well as consonant to the Principles and Practices of other reformed Churches.

'We therefore, justly Reject these new Terms of Peace contained in their Propositions (by which they endeavour to establish their non-declaring Principles) as inconsistent with the Peace and Unity of this Church: and we do declare our steady Adherence, to our own Principles, and that it is Matter of the deepest Concern to us, that by these their Principles, and their declared Resolution to adhere to them, they put it out of our Power, to maintain Ministerial Communion with them in Church-judicatories as formerly, consistently with the faithful Discharge of our Ministerial Office and the Peace of our own Consciences.

Upon a review of the exclusive Canons and Decrees

of the Synod herein above recited, and of the Terms of Ministerial Communion they prescribe, it will be natural enough, and modest enough too, to demand a satisfactory answer to these Querys, *viz.* Is all this fine work *JURE DIVINO*? Can the Synod say, *it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us*? Did Jesus Christ, or his Apostles Impose an assent or Subscription to the *Westminster*-Confession of Faith, as a Term of Ministerial Communion; in the very form, method, and words, in which it was framed by the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, about the *middle* of the *last* Century? And, was it so much as possible, that the Bible shou'd command Candidates to Subscribe a Book, which was not in being for more than fifteen hundred years, after the Canon of Scripture was closed? Is there any passage of Scripture that gives a power to any ONE SINGLE Minister, upon PROTEST made by him against Licensing, or Ordaining any Candidate, to stop the ordination of the Candidate, who may be a most worthy man, entitled to ordination by the rules of the Gospel, and where the whole presbytery (except that one protesting member) may, upon good grounds, think themselves obliged in Conscience to proceed immediately to his ordination? Is there any Law of Christ, and where is it requiring the concurrence of the TWO THIRDS and the ODD MAN, as a necessary term of Ministerial Communion? Is there any Law of Christ, and where is it, for inflicting the Censure of *Suspension* on the person *presiding* in the Licentiating or ordination of a man contrary to the *Pacific act*, a meer human Invention; by which suspension he stands prohibited and incapacitated for doing any Duty of the pastoral office? Has the Scripture enacted the Church-Canon, commonly called the *PACIFIC ACT* made by the Synod in 1720, or the Explanation of said *Act* made 1725, or the *Act* of exclusion of the NON-SUBSCRIBERS, for their disapprobation of said *Acts*, or any of the other *Acts* and *Canons* herein above recited; and

in what place or places of the New Testament are *all*, or *any* of these Acts and Canons to be found? Can any thing be accounted a Scriptural Term of Religious Communion, but what is contained in the Scriptures, in the *very form and words* in which it is *made a Term* of Communion by men? Can it be denied then, that Subscription to the *Westminster*-Confession, or to any other uninspired Confession, the Composure of fallible men, imposed in it's *peculiar form and words*, as the *sole and exclusive Test* of orthodoxy and Term of Ministerial Communion, tho' neither the *book it self*, nor *any* of the Synodical Laws imposing subscription to it, are recorded in the new Testament; can it be fairly denied, I say, that these are unscriptural Terms of Ministerial Communion? I appeal to every man of common sense who can read the Bible, if *all these Querys* must not necessarily be answered in the *negative*. If so, I shou'd think, the Point, which establisheth the force of my Argument is clearly proved, *viz.* that the subscription imposed by the Synod is a new and unscriptural Term of Ministerial Communion: and, therefore, that *Non-Subscription* is *no crime*, being no transgression of any Law of Christ; nay, farther, that it is a *Laudable Remonstrance* against the Exercise of an usurped power, that greatly derogates from the prerogative of Christ as the only King of his own Kingdom, and from the Perfection and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. By all which it appears, that the *FIRST* Argument, I have offered in proof of the *FIRST* Proposition, is in full force against the Subscription imposed by Synodical Authority. That the *OTHER FIVE* Arguments will likewise bear a just application, to the same purpose, is what I am now to show.

THAT the Imposition of the Subscription, under debate, is an ENCROACHMENT on the *Rights of Conscience* and private Judgment (according to the *Second Argument*), is thus proved. The Candidate to be licensed,

ed, ordained, or installed, having deliberately considered the Subscription, imposed by the Synod as a Term of Ministerial Communion, is persuaded in his Conscience that it is a new and unscriptural Term of Communion Superadded to the Terms appointed in the Gospel, by fallible men ; who not only want power from Christ to make any such New Terms, but who are expressly forbid to assume or exercise any such power ; and, that he is warranted by the Laws of Christ, and obliged in Conscience, to pay no obedience to the meer *Commandments and ordinances of men* in matters of Conscience and Religion ; especially, when Human Canons are enacted in violation of a Divine Law forbidding them : and, therefore, he chuses to *obey God rather than man*. For the very same reasons, the presbytery, having had clear and sufficient evidence of his *soundness in the faith*, (which, by the *Second proposition*, they may have without the Imposed subscription) and of his having all other requisite Abilities and Qualifications for the work of the Ministry, dare not refuse him ordination, license, or installment ; and they proceed accordingly. The Christian people who have called him to be their pastor, for the very same reasons, think they have a Right to chuse *any one* to be their Minister who is qualified according to the Gospel ; and, that they are bound in Conscience to *esteem him highly in love for his work's sake*, and to cleave to his Ministry, untill he be convicted of some offence, which do's, by the Gospel-Law, subject him to a forfeiture of the pastoral office and Character ; and to pay no regard to any Censure of Deposition inflicted, for MEER CANONICAL pretended Crimes, to which the Gospel is an utter stranger. But the Synod's exclusive Laws pay no regard to any of those pleas of Conscience ; they *directly command* the CANDIDATE, PRESBYTERY, and CONGREGATION, to do things which are repugnant to the deliberate Dictates of their Conscience. The person pre-
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siding is to be suspended for a year; and, during that time he is absolutely forbid to preach the Gospel and to *feed the flock*; tho' by the Laws of his Great Lord and only Master he is commanded to do it. The person lawfully ordained is DEPOSED, tho' notwithstanding of *this unjust* Censure, he may happen to be a MAN OF God, indeed, remarkable for exemplary piety, for excellent Ministerial Gifts, and for an eminent degree of all the Christian vertues and graces. And, it is certain in Fact, that many of the most eminent and pious Divines, that have been BURNING and SHINING LIGHTS in other Churches, must have been all deposed by the same grievous exclusive Laws, had they been installed in any Congregation within the Synodical Circle, since the date of these Laws. How little this practice favours of the true spirit of Christianity, which is so full of meekness, charity and forbearance, so full of Compassion and of a tender regard for the Consciences of all the faithful servants of Christ, deserves the most serious consideration of all Christian pastors and people.

THat the Synodical Subscription is chargeable with SCHISM, (according to the *third Argument* for proving the *first* proposition) appears thus. It is a manifest Schism, to *keep out*, or *turn out* of the Ministry, any who have complied with all the Scriptural Terms of Ministerial Communion, and who are duly qualified for it; *meerly* for declining a Conformity to unscriptural Terms; and to treat them with contempt and expose them to popular odium, for *that* and *no* other cause. But the Synodical Laws have expressly decree'd, that all who do not Subscribe shall be kept out of the Ministry; and, if any Presbytery shou'd be so just and charitable as to ordain any NON-SUBSCRIBER, the person ordained shall be DEPOSED; by which he is judged to have forfeited the Ministerial Character, and to be utterly unworthy of it. What animosities and divisions this imposing Spirit hath pro-

produced, is too notorious to need any proof. For *no other Cause*, but our adhering to the Gospel-Conditions and Terms of Ministerial Communion, as sufficient without subscription which is *none* of them, have our Synodical Brethren thought fit to exclude the whole presbytery of *Antrim* from their Body: tho' we gave them, from Synod to Synod, repeated challenges to prove that *any one* of us was chargeable with corrupting the Doctrines of Christianity, or with any scandalous Immorality. For blessed be God, we had *for our rejoycing the Testimony of our Consciences*. Our greatest Enemies durst not accept of the challenge; but found that the surest way they had, was, to use the mean and sneaking artifices of detraction and calumny, by infusing groundless jealousies (as you do) into the minds of the populace; who were generally unacquainted with the true state of the Controversy about SUBSCRIPTION; and, who cou'd not distinguish between a declining of subscription to the *Westminster-Confession*, from a disbelief of the Doctrines it contains, which was NOT the case; and a declining of Subscription to IT, or to *any other Book*, when it is made an Human Test of Divine Truths, and a *sole exclusive* standard and term of Ministerial Communion, which was the true State of the Case; as every body may now clearly see, by the *Six Propositions* I am defending. The deluded people, going upon the wrong state of the Question, immediately took fire; concluding, that every body that wou'd not subscribe the Confession must deny the great truths it contains, or at least some of them. Which uncharitable and groundless opinion they imbibed greedily, from the least *dark hint* given them by any furious zealot; nay, from *any such* (happening to talk about *Non-subscribers*) a shrug of the shoulders, a grave shake of the head, a deep sigh, a melancholy tone of the voice or a ny other *stupid signal of that kind*, was enough to raise a Panic, and to blacken the Characters they durst not

not impeach in an open Candid manner, before men of sense.

From the year 1721 to 1726, every Synod inflamed the Divisions, by a prevalent *spirit of schism*, which Govern'd the Councils of their Leaders; as will appear by the following brief sketch of their proceedings, which the nature of my Argument obliges me to lay before the Reader. In the year 1721, the very Controversy which had split the protestant Dissenting Ministers of *London*, in their Assembly at *Salters-hall* in 1719, was introduced into the Synod; tho' in 1720, the Synod in their Letter to the *London*-Ministers, had declared they wou'd *not meddle with the Controversy, nor take any part in that debate*. That Synodical debate was scarce over, before another was brought in, upon a motion for Liberty to subscribe the *Westminster*-Confession, according to the Terms of the Pacific Act. This brought on the Carpet a long and warm debate, about imposing Creeds and Confessions as Terms of Communion. The worthy Ministers of *Dublin*, foreseeing the evil tendency of these proceedings, against which they cautioned the Synod with great zeal and affection; observed, with pleasure, the vindication of the orthodoxy of the Non-Subscribers, (with respect to the great Article of our Saviour's Deity) recorded in the minutes of that Synod; and, they and all the friends of peace rejoiced in the Synod's CHARITABLE DECLARATION, wherein they set forth, *that they did not intend to insinuate the least reflection upon the Non-subscribers, as if they were unsound in the faith, and that different sentiments on that head do not justify uncharitable jealousies, or breach of Communion among us*. But, the poyson, communicated by these debates, was too strong to be expelled by so weak an Antidote. Supplications from the Sessions of eighteen Congregations, were read in open Synod, containing odious and scandalous reflections on Ministers as *not sound in the Faith*, described by such

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Characters, as made it clear that they were pointed against the *Belfast-Society*. Had the Synod reasoned with the Messengers, who thrust these *scandalous Libels* into their hands, for shewing them the evil of such vile calumny, they had exoner'd their own Consciences, at least; if they cou'd not convince the guilty. But their *Silence* was a *tacit* encouragement to such evil practices. And, the mean compliances the Synod made, by their *Declaration* and *Subscription*, to satisfy the jealous, who laid them under an *Arbitrary Inquisition*, contrary to the Rules of Christian Discipline, proved a virtual License to these Libellers to accuse all, who wou'd prefer scriptural Discipline to their Arbitrary and petulant demands. All the Sixteen earnestly pray, that 'all the members of the Synod and of all Inferior Judicatories may be obliged to subscribe the *Westminster-Confession*, as the Confession of their faith' This previous step was contrived to distress the friends of Liberty. And, in the Synod's Charitable Declaration, there was an ambiguous Clause, which was improved by those who had a mind to evade the force of that declaration. The words are 'we earnestly recommend to our people, that they may entertain no jealousies or ill opinions concerning any of their Ministers, *merely on account of their not subscribing AT THIS TIME*' The construction the uncharitable put upon it, was, that if their Ministers would not Subscribe in some short time after this Synod, they could not be entitled to the benefit of the Charitable Declaration; that there was to be no Synodical breach at THAT TIME; it was to be the work of *another* time, of *another* Synod, when the *Non-subscribers* would be more weakened and discouraged, by the desertion of their hearers, and the destruction of their Congregations; which was immediately set on foot. For, even before the Conclusion of that Synod, an application was made to them for a *New Erection*, merely on account of their Ministers not Subscribing

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ing at that time ; and in less than two years, *three new* Congregations were erected upon the same foundation, and more afterwards.

Immediately after this Synod, the PULPIT and the PRESS begun to found an alarm ; a vile Incendiary published a scandalous Libel, called *The Mind of the Synod* ; charging the *Non-subscribers* with ARIANISM and many other abominable Errors ; notwithstanding of the just vindication of *them* from those aspersions, standing upon record in the Synod's Minutes. And, tho' the late Rd. Messrs *Boyse, Weld, Iredel, and Choppin*, eye and ear-witnesses of the whole transactions of that Synod, did by their Letters, published to the world, express their full satisfaction with the proofs made of the Orthodoxy of the *Non-subscribers*, in that great Article of the Supreme Deity of our Saviour ; and, tho *they* clearly refuted the Calumny of *that* malicious, stupid *Scribbler* ; His scandalous stories were industriously propagated, and believed by many, who treated with contempt the demonstration that was given of their *arrant falsehood*. A Deplorable effect of horrid Bigotry, that stops all the avenues thro' which Truth can enter into the minds of reasonable Creatures !

In the Synod 1722, an overture was brought into open Synod, and for some time warmly debated, for *excluding out of communion with the Synod all those who would not subscribe the Westminster-Confession of Faith, and the Answers to the fifth and sixth Questions in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* ; where Jealousies and reflections were vented very liberally against *Non-subscribers* ; and with much ado it was prevented from being past into an Act. 'Tis true, they made, in the Conclusion, a sort of a new *Charitable Declaration* in our favour ; but it was so tack'd to a new set of Impositions and Declarations, and past with such a *Limitation and Condition*, as made it look very awkward, and very like a thing that was much against the grain : It is in these

words 'Tho' they' (the Synod) ' adhere to the *Westminster-Confession of Faith* as a *Test of orthodoxy*, yet ' they desire to exercise Christian forbearance towards their ' Brethren now actually in the Ministry in this Church, with ' respect to their different sentiments on this Head; PROVIDED always, that they govern themselves *according to the acts of Synods* in this Church, and *do not disturb the peace thereof* ' i. e. ' while the *Non-subscribers* will be our humble Slaves, and reject the most pious and well qualified Candidates' whom Christ has received, and commanded them (as they verily believe) to receive; and refuse them ordination, *meerly* because they will not comply with unscriptural Terms; while they will prefer obedience to our Acts and Tests to what themselves account obedience to the Laws of the Gospel; while they tamely submit to our Laws, and do not presume to *disturb the peace* of this Church, by so much as opening their lips against Canons they take to be sinful, they shall have our *good leave* to sit in our Synods. But if they give way to their Consciences, and *rebell* against our *Exclusive Test of orthodoxy*, they must expect to turn out; their practice will then be intolerable.' Rare Charity, this: If we must *thus govern* ourselves, who would be our Master? Christ, or the Synod?

IN the year 1723, an extraordinary process managed with keeness, and as an avowed justification of a breach of Communion, was carried on against the *Non-subscribers*, before the Synod, by a particular Hand, who undertook the prosecution. His charge against them was in these words ' That the *Non-subscribers* maintain principles, which open a door to let in Errors and Heresies ' into this Church ' And being asked what these principles are, held by them, which *open a door*, &c. He charged them with holding this principle ' That no Declaration of faith, Creed or Confession of Faith, in ' human words meerly, or the words of fallible men, is

‘or can be a Test of orthodoxy, or Terms of Ministerial Communion in this Church.’ For a full and just account of this process, I beg leave to refer the Reader to our NARRATIVE of the proceedings of seven General Synods, &c. from p. 74 to p. 133. If the conduct of the Synod in *that* process has been uncharitable, partial, and manifestly unjust, it will strengthen my Argument for fixing the guilt of Schism upon their Impositions. This I will endeavour to prove, from Facts which stand upon record in their own Minutes.

First, it appears, that the *Defendants* demanded, as an act of Justice, that the *Prosecutor* should be obliged to explain his charge, because it was capable of contradictory senses; which, if unexplained, would render it impossible for *them* to make their proper Defences, and would lead the Judges to a wrong or ambiguous Decision. But the Synod would neither oblige the *Prosecutor* to explain the Charge, nor give any Explanation themselves. The *absurdity* and *Iniquity* of such a proceeding is sufficiently exposed in the *written plea* of the *Defendants*, entered into the Synod’s Records, a Copy whereof is placed at the foot of the page. *

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* SINCE this Synod have not been pleased to oblige the *Prosecutor* to ascertain the Sense of this general Proposition wherewith they charge us, viz! *That no Declaration of Faith Creed or Confession of Faith in human Words merely, or the Words of fallible Men is or can be a Test of Orthodoxy, or Terms of Ministerial Communion in this Church,* which Proposition we have shown to be so Ambiguous, as to admit of contradictory Meanings, whereby Perplexity and Confusion may be Occasioned, both in the Pleadings of the Partys, and Judgment of the Members, which tends to Influence the Judges to come to wrong or ambiguous Conclusions; The DEFENDANTS therefore Answer, that if the above mentioned Proposition be understood in this Sense, viz. *That no Declaration or Confession of Faith except in Scripture Words only, ought to be required of any as an Evidence of their Soundness in the Faith, in order to Qualify them for Admission into the Ministry in this Church,* then the *Defendants* allow the PROSECUTORS to proceed in adducing their Evidence, under the Limitation hereafter to be mentioned, for proving that they, the said *Defendants* have vented and maintained the said Principle in the said Sense. If the Proposition is to be understood in the following Sense, viz. *That no particular authorized Form in the words of uninspired Men should be the sole and exclusive Test of Orthodoxy, so as any particular Person offering a satisfactory Confession of his Faith in his own Words, tho’ other than Scripture Words, should be admitted into the Ministry in this Church;* then the DEFENDANTS Answer, That

Such an ambiguous Indictment against a Prisoner at the Bar, would be quashed immediately. Had the Defendants been allowed the Liberty of shewing that the Charge, when explained and confined to the principle which was *really theirs*, was not relevant, (a term used in Ecclesiastical Assemblies, of our persuasion), that is to say, that it contained no censurable offence, and that, therefore, it ought not to be sustained as an Article of a Libel against any man; they would have clearly proved, that the principle they held is so far from *opening a door to let in heresy and Error into the Church*, that it was a noble security to Truth; as will appear in the sequel of this Defence.

Secondly, when the *prosecutors* (for now there were *two of them*) for proving their ambiguous charge, offered to read some paragraphs of a Book entituled a VINDICATION of the *presbyterian Ministers in the North of Ireland, subscribers and Non-subscribers, from many gross and groundless aspersions*, &c. The Defendants objected, that the *prosecutors* ought first to prove, that the Defendants were

• That the Accusation is not RELEVANT, that is to say, It does not infer
 • Censure, and therefore ought not to be the matter of an *Ecclesiastical Process*. If
 • it be alledg'd, that the Proposition is to be taken in *both Senses*, then the De-
 • fendants say, that the Accusation is *Contradictory* and *Absurd*, and ought to be
 • immediately Rejected, without admitting the *Prosecutors* to adduce any Evidence
 • at all. If the aforesaid Proposition is to be understood in a *Sense different from*
 • *either of these* above assigned, the *Defendants* Answer, that they can make no
 • Defence, till the Sense be declared, either by the *Prosecutors* or by the Synod.
 • But whereas the *Prosecutors* declared, that their general Proposition did not
 • mean nor glance at what is commonly called the ALTERNATIVE, which
 • we take to be this, *that a Person in order to his being Qualified for Admission into*
 • *this Church, shou'd be allowed his Liberty to declare his Faith in the Words of the*
 • *Westminster-Confession, or to use Words of his own, which may be satisfying to his*
 • *Ordnainers*; altho' that Explanation is not sufficient, yet since the Synod have
 • refused to require any thing further from the *Prosecutors*, the *Defendants* are willing
 • to proceed, reserving to themselves the Liberty of demanding a more full Explan-
 • cation, which may appear necessary in the Course of the Trial. The *Limitation*
 • with respect to the Evidence, already Referred to, is this; that *no Evidence* shall
 • be Admitted against them here but such as was offered to the Synod of *Belfast*,
 • because *such only* shou'd be brought before this Synod upon the APPEAL; and
 • because they have a right, by the common Rules of Proceeding in this Church,
 • to know the Evidence that is to be brought against them, a competent Time
 • before their Tryal; in order to their being prepared for making a Defence,
 • and the *Defendants* humbly Crave that this written Plea be entred into the Re-
 • cords of this Synod.

the authors or abettors of the VINDICATION, before any part of it should be read as evidence against them ; which, as it was the most natural and just method of proceeding, it would save time. For the Defendants were perfectly sure, and the event showed they were not mistaken, that the *prosecutors* could not fix that book on them ; and, that the inverting of the natural and just order was an ARTIFICE to lead the *Defendants* into a Defence of that book ; and, by this means to make *them* evidences against themselves, that they might be condemned out of their own mouths, when they could not be fairly convicted upon the testimony of witnesses : a proceeding, that ought to be check'd and discouraged by all Righteous Judges. But the Synod, deaf to this demand of Common Justice, overruled the plea of the Defendants, and allowed the prosecutors to go on in their own way. Upon which, the first of the prosecutors, read several paragraphs out of the VINDICATION, making what remarks he thought proper for the service of his Cause ; of which the *Defendants* took brief notes, for enabling them to give a reply at a proper time ; not in the least suspecting, that the Synod would be quite so unreasonable, as to condemn a book, brought in evidence against them, without allowing them an opportunity of being heard, on the objections made against it by *their accuser*. But the event convinced them, that they had been too sanguine in their expectations.

Thirdly, the *Prosecutors* charged the *Defendants* with holding a principle, which they (the prosecutors) called a dangerous error, and which the *Defendants* affirmed to be an Important Truth. This charge they founded on the following passage of a paper published by the Belfast-Society in 1720, and avowed by them in the face of the Synod, entitled THE GOOD OLD WAY, wherein they say, p. 13. ' Indeed we think, that 'tis very agreeable to Charity, that those points wherein the *reason of men* and the *sincerity of Christians* permit them to differ ; and which,

‘ which, therefore, *cannot be* the essentials and vitals of religion, should not occasion any breach, alienation of affection, or excommunicating Canons.’ The Error charged on the Defendants was in this implied proposition, that *these points, wherein the reason of men and the sincerity of Christians permit them to differ; cannot be the Essentials or vitals of religion*; which proposition was maintained, by the Defendants, as a great and Important Truth, and rejected by the Prosecutors as a dangerous Error. The Defendants, in proof of their proposition, said, that if it be false, then the *reverse* of it, the *contradictory* proposition must be true: for of two contradictory propositions, one must be false and the other true. But the contradictory proposition, which is this, (that *those points wherein the reason of men and sincerity of Christians permit them to differ, are, or may be the Essentials or vitals of Religion*) is evidently false. For if sincerity can permit them to *differ*, it can permit them to *err*, in the *Essentials* or *vitals* of Religion. If so, sincerity permits them to fall into a *fundamental Error*; which, by the very nature of a fundamental Error, must be *damnable*. Then may Christians have *sincere* faith in Christ, *sincere* repentance, *sincere* love to God and man, *sincere* new obedience, (for all this is included in the *sincerity of Christians*), and may nevertheless, be in a state of damnation, by holding some fundamental Error. If this Doctrine be true, they may bid adieu to the *peace and joy of believing*, and to the greatest comforts of the Christian Life, which arise from a Conscious sense of their sincerity thro’ Christ Jesus.

The Defendants further argued from the following Texts. Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Now, all sincere Christians are in Christ Jesus, &c. Therefore, there is no condemnation to any such, and their sincerity do’s not permit them to err fundamentally: for if it did, from the very de-

definition of a fundamental Error, there would be condemnation to them. *Jo. vii. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.* Now, all sincere Christians, are doers of the will of God; and, therefore, entitled to the promise that they shall know the *Doctrine*; not absolutely all (even Religious) *Truth*; but from the nature of the thing, the scope of the whole Gospel, and the Context, it must be understood as a security against error in the Essentials or vitals of Religion. *Jo. x. 3, 4, 5-----the sheep hear his voice-----he goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Now, erring fundamentally, erring in the Essentials and vitals of Religion, is inconsistent with the Character Christ here gives of his sheep, i. e. of all sincere Christians.

This *Erroneous Doctrine* of the *Prosecutors* was alleged by the *Defendants* to be contrary to an Excellent article in the *Westminster-Confession*, which says (CHAP. ii. ART. 7,) "Those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for Salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the *Learned* but the *unlearned*, in a due use of the ordinary means may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them." Sincere Christians, do duly use the ordinary means; and, therefore, they actually attain to a sufficient understanding of all things necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, in other words, of all fundamental articles of faith, and, therefore, their sincerity do's not permit them to err fundamentally; for that would fix upon them an Error, in points of which they have a sufficient understanding; a thing, in it self impossible.

To these Arguments the *prosecutors* made no reply. But in favour of their own Doctrine, they advanced two things.

things. 1st, That a good man, a Sincere Christian, may fall into a deliberate transgression; and by a parity of reason, into a fundamental Error; tho' they did not suppose he could continue in either, because of the doctrine of the perseverance of saints. It was ANSWERED, that the argument did not conclude; for the Question is not, what a good man, a Sincere Christian, may happen to do, *when his sincerity forsakes him?* but what his still remaining sincerity permits him to do? If he falls into a deliberate Transgression, his Sincerity has departed from him; and, while his Sincerity remains, it do's not permit him to fall into a deliberate Sin, nor into a fundamental Error. 2dly, they argued from the case of *Thomas*, who denied, (they should have rather said doubted) of the Resurrection of Christ, which is evidently declared in scripture a Fundamental Article of Christianity; To which the Defendants replied, that the Resurrection of Christ, is undoubtedly Fundamental now; but it was not so, when *Thomas* denied or doubted of it, he had not the clear and full evidence of the truth of it laid before him *then*; and that part of the scriptures, which afterwards made it a fundamental, was not *then* written. But the *prosecutors* still insisted, that the number of Fundamentals was the *same* from the beginning of Christianity; nay, the *same* under the *old Testament*, as now, that is, (as they explained them) those things which were fundamental, or necessary to be believed as *past* or *actually existing*, were formerly fundamental as *future* and promised; which, the Defendants said, appeared to them to be a very gross mistake. For some things made fundamental in the *new Testament* were not so clearly revealed under the *old Testament*, nor so expressly declared to be necessary to salvation, as to render them Fundamental Articles in *that* Dispensation. But the New Testament Revelation of them is so perspicuous, and the necessity of believing them,

them, as a term of salvation, so expressly determined in the Bible, that they are *now fundamental*, tho' they were not so *formerly*.

The judicious Reader must observe, from the management of this branch of the Controversy, that men who conscientiously decline Subscription to a Confession, when Imposed as an *Exclusive Test*, and a Term of Communion, may notwithstanding firmly believe the Truths contained in that Confession, and prove zealous advocates for them, which was the case of the Defendants; And on the other hand, that some may be keen imposers of *every single proposition* in the *Westminster-Confession* upon others, and yet may vent and vehemently contend for errors of pernicious influence on practice, clearly condemned by reason and scripture, and by an important article of *that every Confession* for which they profess so great a veneration, which was the case of the prosecutors. The Defendants had great reason to complain, that the synod could never be prevailed on, tho' often press'd to it, to vindicate them, the Defendants, from teaching false Doctrine; tho' this was a Solemn charge brought against them, and entred in their records. Common justice and the common course of Christian Discipline required, that the Defendants should have been honourably acquitted, after their giving such a clear and full demonstration of their innocence. What was now become of the Synod's mighty Zeal for Truth and Orthodoxy, so much boasted of by all their partizans, as the pure spring of *their Exclusive Tests and Impositions*? What! must the despised *Non-subscribers* have the honour of *standing alone*, in defence of *Divine Truth*, while their accusers let their Error fly round the Synod and a crowded Audience, with as much boldness, as if they had been licenc'd to do it with Impunity, and without censure; the Synod acting rather like by-standers, got into an inglorious Neutrality, than as impartial Judges, and as the friends of Truth!

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, the prosecutors, for proof of the first charge, about Creeds and Confessions, &c. (set forth P. 50.) insisted upon a Liberty of adducing new witnesses, that were not offered at the *Belfast-Synod*; which the *Defendants* opposed, as being contrary to all the *essential Rules* of an equitable process, upon an *Appeal* from this plea the *Defendants* would not depart, and the Synod had no power to oblige them to it. The Synod ought to have passed Judgment and to have acquitted the *Defendants*; there being no evidence against them. The plain course of justice demanded this issue. But instead of this, the Synod appointed a Committee to 'frame Overtures upon this affair, and bring them in to next Sederunt.' The *Defendants* demanded of the Synod, and their Right, that *these overtures* might be communicated to them, and that they should be heard upon them, before the Synod should come to any resolution about them. To which the MODERATOR, (seeming to resent the demand, as implying a jealousy of the Synod's design to condemn without hearing) answered, *why do you doubt of the Synod? Do you think the Synod is capable of doing such a thing, as to judge overtures that affect you, without first hearing you?* No Member contradicting him they took *this* to be the public faith of the Synod. The Moderator's argument was indeed, very strong for proving that the Synod ought not to have done such a barbarous piece of injustice, as to *judge without hearing*; but very weak for shewing, that they *were not capable* of doing it for, to their lasting reproach, *they did it in a few hours* after the *Defendants* had put in their Claim of Right against it. These proceedings must be astonishing to posterity. To judge *three material points*, without hearing the parties affected by them; and, *three several times* to resolve by vote, that they *would not bear* them, has something in it that is very shocking to human Nature. That the Teachers of Christianity should be guilty of such im-

quitor

quitous Decisions, as are condemned by the Common principles of Humanity and Equity, and which are ever five of the Liberties of Mankind, must be a Grievance of a very Extraordinary Nature. That the world may see, that my representation of this Fact is fair and just, I have set down a true Copy of the Records of the Synod, at the foot of the page. * After all, the Synod put off the Tryal to another year, which was another manifest Act of injustice to the *Defendants*; for the Synod perfectly knew, that by the Rules of their own Constitution, it was impossible to convict the *Defendants*; and, yet they would not acquit them. They sent them home, with their Characters loaded with accusations, which could not be proved; but the adjournment of the Tryal had a tendency to make people believe, that they would, or might, be proved afterwards; a thing, in it self impossible,

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in

* Sefs. 16. *Die Ven: Jun. 27. hor. 8. ante Meridiem, post Preces sederunt, qui supra.*
 'THE DEFENDANTS understanding, that some Overtures upon the *Affair* in *Dependance*, are to be brought into this Synod, desire that before this Synod come to any Conclusion upon these Overtures, they the *Defendants* may be heard what they have to offer upon these Overtures.

'THE Committee appointed to frame Overtures UPON THIS AFFAIR, brought in their Overtures and they were read; and the Members of the Synod of *Belfast* who are SUBSCRIBERS moved, that they may be allowed to reason and vote upon said Overtures; this the Synod agreed to. It being also moved, that *Parties be called in and heard, and allowed to reason upon said Overtures, before this Synod approve or reject them*; the Question was put in these Words, *hear them or not*, and it carried NOT, by a great Majority. Against which Resolution 'several Members' desired that their Dissent might be entered into our Minutes.

1st Resol. 'THEN the first Resolution was read and after reasoning it was read again, and is in these Words, Resolution 1st. That for the Security of this Church, it be declared by this Synod, and that agreeable to a Resolution of our last General Synod in *Derry*, viz. *That the declaring Articles of Faith only in Scripture Words and Expressions, shall not be accepted as a sufficient Evidence of a Person's Soundness in the Faith, by this Church.* RESOLVED, that the Condemning all Creeds and Confessions or Declarations of Faith, in human words, as Tests of Orthodoxy, opens a Door to let in Errors and Heresies into this Church: Then the Question was put, *approve said Resolution, or not*, and it carried approve, *nemine contradicente*.

'THEN the second Resolution was read, and after reasoning it was read again, and it was moved, that the *Parties be heard upon this Resolution*, and this Motion being opposed, the Question was put, HEAR THE PARTIES OR NOT? and it carried NOT, by a great Majority 'Several Members' desired that their Dissent from this Vote be entered into the Records.-----the Resolution is in *hisc Verbis*.

2^d Resol.

in the case of an *Appeal* where no new evidences are allowed. But, to cut off all handle of reflections, as if the Non-subscribers were afraid of new Evidences, they offered themselves to a new Tryal, provided the Synod would restore them their Rights they had violated, form a plain distinct charge against them, free from ambiguity, repeal the *resolutions* they had made *without hearing them*, and do them justice in the issue of the *process* then depending before them. But, all to no purpose. In a few months after this famous Synodical process, matters were carried so high, that a *Session* of a certain Congregation excluded two Non-subscribing Ministers from the Lord's Supper, meerly because they *were in their Judgment against subscribing the Westminster-Confession of Faith as a Test of Orthodoxy*. A Rent was made in the mystical Body of Christ, and arbitrary enclosures were made about the Lord's-Table, as if it had been the SUBSCRIBERS-

TABLE

2d Resol. 'Tho' it may be alledged, that Candidates for the Ministry, by Words of their own, may declare their Faith, to the Satisfaction of their Ordainers; yet that a particular part of this Church should have it in their Power, to judge what in that case must be satisfactory to the whole Body, is *too great a Trust*, and extremely dangerous. Then the Question was put, *approve said Resolution, or not?* and it carried APPROVE, by a great Majority'. (There was a Dissent enter'd from this Vote.) THEN the THIRD Resolution was read, and after reasoning it was read again, and it was moved, that the *Defendants may be called in, and heard upon this Resolution*, but this Motion being opposed by some, the Question was put, *Call in THE DEFENDANTS, OR NOT?* and it was carried NOT, by a great Majority'. Several Members desired that their Dissent from this Vote may be entered into our Records. The Resolution is in the following Words.

3d. Resol. WHEREAS it appears to us, that the Scope of the Pamphlet, entitled, the VINDICATION, &c. is to reason against, and condemn all Creeds and Confessions in Human Words, and the Church's insisting upon any Acknowledgment of such, or Assents to them, as Tests of Orthodoxy, in order to ministerial Communion, in opposition to our present Constitution, in order to the condemning of Subscribers; therefore this Synod judges, said Pamphlet to be of a very dangerous and pernicious Tendency to this Church, and that the Author or Authors, Publisher and industrious Dispersers thereof, have been Disturbers of the Peace of this Church. And we agree to declare, that we do not hereby intend to fix said Pamphlet on any Person or Persons in particular; and this Synod further declares, that we do not hereby intend to justify the Pamphlet called, *an Account of the Mind of the Synod*, or a Reply to *Duguid's Paper*. Then the Question was put, *approve said Resolution, or not?* and it carried APPROVE, by a great Majority.

TABLE, and NOT THE LORD'S. For a more circumstantial Relation of this melancholy affair, and for plain Scripture arguments against that notorious Schism, I beg leave to refer my Readers to my *Scripture-plea against a fatal Rupture*, &c. published in 1724.

In the year 1724, the Synod excluded one of the Non-subscribers (not on the former process; for that was dropt) by *laying him under a plain Inquisition*, to which he thought it sinful for him to submit. Of this more afterwards, in my *Defence of the fifth proposition*. In the year 1725, they passed the Act explanatory of the *Pacific Act*, recited p. 40. And they transmitted to the presbyterys *five overtures*, just so many *bones of contention*, all tending to a Rupture. In them, they proposed to establish a subscription to the *Westminster-Confession*, as a term of membership in *all their Judicatories*, a power of holding an *Arbitrary Inquisition on any member* at pleasure, without process or accuser; and a *HIGH-CHURCH-POWER*, upon pain of Censure to be inflicted on all who would presume to deny it. He must be very blind, who do's not see that all these rare overtures were contrived as traps for the *Non-subscribers*. The Synod found out where they could pinch them. In the year 1726, they made the *Fatal Rupture*, without quoting so much as one single Text of Scripture in justification of it, or giving any answer to the *many Texts* contained in our *Expedients for peace*, against it, tho' often desired to do both.

From these undeniable Facts, set forth in the brief history I have given of the proceedings of those Synods, it must be apparent to all, that the Synod had *quite lost* that degree of Brotherly Love to the *Non-subscribers* that was due to them; they suffered their Characters to be tore to pieces, they stripped them of their proper defences, they *judged* their cause *unheard*, they refused to do them common justice, they did all they could to expose them to popular odium, and to render their Ministry

stry useless. The Impositions, accompanied with such a spirit, issuing in such a *fatal breach*, present us with a *finished Character of SCHISM*, on the side of the Imposers. It discovered an intemperate zeal in them, that no interposition, from the most eminent protestant Dissenting Gentlemen in the City of DUBLIN, nor from the Majority of the *Dissenting* Gentlemen in the North of Ireland, could divert them from these divisive Courses; that the unwearied pacific endeavours of the Ministers of *Dublin*, headed by the personal appearance, in divers Synods, of such truly Great, Pious, and experienced Divines as Mr. BOYSE, and Mr. WELD, men whose Characters commanded respect and veneration from protestants of *all Denominations* in the Kingdom, could make no Impressions on them, for allaying their animosities. The SCHISM and alienation of affection must have been deeply rooted in such minds, as were quite impenetrable to the moving address and advice of those Excellent Divines, expressed in their Recommendatory preface to the late Revd. Mr. *Abernethy's* SEASONABLE ADVICE (published in 1722). From their preface I have extracted some memorable passages, which the Reader will find at the foot of the page *

That

* 'Tis an hard case (*say they* p. 8.)
 ' that any *worthy pastors* who have so long discharged their Ministry with
 ' faithfulness and diligence, whose Ministry has been so useful and attended with
 ' remarkable Success (and some of whom have been a singular ornament and
 ' Defence to the Common Cause of *Non-Conformity*) against whose sound Doc-
 ' trine and blameless conversation no man has ever brought any accusation which
 ' he was able to make proof of, should be in any danger of being deserted by
 ' their people, *meerly* because they decline complying with *their* humour in a
 ' matter contrary to their own Judgment' and (P. 13.) they say, ' that pious
 ' Ministers themselves should differ in their sentiments about-----the expe-
 ' diency of subscription to *human Compositions*, that descend to the decision of *many*
 ' *particular* points, which are comparatively of small moment; and about which
 ' the *wisest* and *best* Divines may disagree, is not to be wondered at' they add,
 ' that 'to blast the Credit and to destroy the usefulness of such as have been *burn-*
 ' *ing and shining Lights* in the Church of God, is a practice most directly con-
 ' trary to all the Injunctions of mutual forbearance, peace and love, which
 ' the Gospel abounds with, and particularly to that excellent and invari-
 ' able Rule which the Apostle Paul has given for our conduct, That *we*
 ' *should receive one another, as Christ also received us to the Glory of God.* Rom. xv. 7.

And,

That the Imposed synodical Subscription is chargeable with SUPERSTITION, (as all unscriptural Terms of Communion are, by the *fourth* Argument for proving our *first* proposition) appears thus. The Imposers have judged the maintaining of the principle which contradicts theirs, and the practice opposite to theirs, to be a *disturbing the peace of the Church*, to be of *pernicious and dangerous Consequence*, and to *open a door to let in Heresy and Error into the Church*; which they must, therefore, look upon as highly displeasing to God; and have decreed the rejecters of their unscriptural Terms of Communion to be DEPOSED, by which they have ordered *as great a censure* to be inflicted on those *meer Canonical delinquents*, as what they inflict on *Adulterers* and the *most wicked scandalous wretches*; they have declared the words of fallible men to have a virtue and power for keeping Heresies and Errors out of the Church, which they deny to *the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the *words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; and, by an undue stress they lay on those Imposed human forms, they have *made the commandments of God* (concerning Charity and forbearance) *of none Effect*, which is Superstition.

That the Imposition of Human Confessions as exclusive Tests of orthodoxy gives offence, in the Scriptural Notion of offence, that is, *it leads men into Sin*, (as all unscriptural Terms of Communion do, or may do, by our *fifth* Argument for proof of the *first* proposition), I prove thus. Men on whom these Confessions are

And, therefore we cannot but earnestly dissuade all those who *Love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity* from incurring the guilt of it.

'Tis a dangerous thing, 'Tis an heinous Injury, to reject or desert those (or even to grieve their hearts, and weaken their hands) whom Christ himself will receive and own as *faithful Labourers in his vineyard*; and, that meerly for acting according to the best of their judgment in matters wherein Ministers *truly sound in the faith*, and of great Integrity of Life, may easily, entertain different Apprehensions. This will render no man's account comfortable in the Great day of final Judgment.

are imposed are laid under a strong temptation to neglect an *Impartial Inquiry* into truth, and to receive Doctrines by an *implicit faith*, or to dissemble and *prevaricate* in their Subscription, all which are great sins; and they are led into *these* sins by these exclusive Tests. When Ministers and students of Divinity know, that they must subscribe these *authorized forms*, or starve, and be useless in the world; they are *tempted* to read the Scriptures, not so much to find the mind of God, as to search for arguments to prove the *Doctrines of their respective* Confessions; and, by that means, the scripture is tortured and wire drawn into a meaning that the *Holy Ghost* never designed; or, the Confession is wrested, contrary to the intention of the compilers, and an uncandid, unsincere subscription made to it. Besides, it gives a secret byass to the mind, which the subscriber himself do's not perceive. This is the *only reason* that can be assigned for such *contradictory TOPICAL ORTHODOXY* in the world: The *Danes and Swedes*, and the inhabitants of divers other Countries, do all find *CONSUBSTANTIATION* in the Bible; and, in other Countries, not *one Soul* can see it THERE. We all know what has been advanced in print, of late years, in justification of men's subscription to Articles, as *Articles of peace*, which they did not believe as *articles of Truth*; and, for the lawfulness of subscribing articles, in a sense contrary to the *obvious* sense of the words, and to the *avowed* sense of the *compilers*. It is a lamentable case, that men should be thus tempted to make too free with their Consciences. And, where the temptation do's not prevail so far as this, it insensibly leads men into an *implicit human faith*, which is not founded solely upon the Testimony of God, but is greatly influenced by human Authority. If Human Confessions composed by many Divines assembled in a Synod or Council, were treated as having *no more Authority* over our faith than if they had been composed by a *single Divine*, which is the only Light in which they ought

ought to be considered by an Impartial Inquirer into Truth, instead of doing hurt, they might be of some use; and, in that sense I have never opposed them: but when they are set up as *Authoritative Imposed Tests of orthodoxy*, they give the mind a byass and prepossession in favour of the Doctrines they contain, (right or wrong, true or false,) before they be impartially examined by the only Rule of faith, the word of God. The Memory of a late excellent Christian and worthy Minister deserves a high regard for the Integrity and good sense that appeared, in a very solemn grave Speech he made in the Synod in 1725, upon this subject, recited at the foot of the page. *

If men would, with the same honesty, and plainness unbo-
 som themselves, we should be furnished with many more
 proofs of the same kind. In our present circumstances,
 and by the management of Synods, a great deal of *Im-
 plicit human* faith becomes the unavoidable Consequence
 of the Impositions. For numbers of honest Country-
 farmers, mechanicks, and men unacquainted with polemic
 Divinity, take upon them to sit in Synods, as Constituent
 I members,

* 'When I was a Candidate, I subscribed the *Westminster-Confession*; but I own I am very sorry that I did so, because I did it *too Implicitly*. For I find since, upon Examining several Articles of it by the Scriptures, that I did not, when I Subscribed them, truly understand the Conformity of them to the word of God: And therefore, tho' I Subscribed what was true, I did not do it upon a sufficient Evidence of the Truth to beget in me a Divine Faith: And what was my Case may be the Case of many others: And it is a very hard Case, to lay such *stumbling Blocks* before young Men, when they are to be solemnly Devoted to the Ministry.

'PARDON me if I should say (and I am sure I intend it not as a personal Reflection on any Body) that I do not believe that the Majority of this Assembly can with Judgment Subscribe to *all the Doctrines* of the *Westminster-Confession*; nay, I question, whether there be *any one* Member who can do it: For I could never yet meet with *any two* Men, who perfectly Agree'd about the true Sense and Meaning of every Proposition in it; nor with *any one* Man who did not deny the Truth of some one Proposition in the most obvious and plain Sense of the Words. And is it not most Unreasonable, that an Assembly which *cannot themselves Subscribe, with Judgment, the whole Doctrines of the Confession*, should take upon them to impose such a Subscription upon others? There are many of the most difficult and knotty Points in Divinity decided in the Confession, which the most learned, pious and experienced Ministers amongst us all may remain unsatisfy'd in, to his dying Day: And therefore it is too Severe and Cruel, to STOP the License or Ordination of a young Man well Qualified for the Ministry, *merely on such an Account*.

members, and there to decide nice controversies in Religion, upon many arduous knotty points, concerning which the most pious and learned Divines the world ever saw were of different sentiments; and the same men take upon them to *impose* these decisions upon all Candidates for the Ministry. In these cases, the nature of the thing makes it impossible, for such men to act after this manner, without a very great measure of *Implicit, human* faith. The bulk of the Christian people, within the Synodical Association, are as keen and zealous, as the Synod themselves, for imposing Subscription to the *Westminster* Confession on all the Candidates; and, would look on it as a great crime, to chuse the most learned and pious Divine, and the best preacher within the visible Church, to be their Pastor, if they knew he would not subscribe it, if he would not assent to above *one thousand prepositions*, without the exception of *any one*, even of the minutest of them all. It is utterly impossible, that all those Christian people should believe, with an entire Divine faith, the truth of all these propositions; and, therefore, a great deal of *Implicit human* faith must be the principle of their conduct; and, this is *not the accidental Effect*, but the *necessary and natural Consequence* of the Synod's Impositions. I do not accuse people of a culpable Ignorance, because they do not know more than is possible for them to know; but, their fault lies in giving their vote for, and approbation of things which they cannot believe with a thorough Divine faith; and therefore, must act upon a vast deal of *Implicit human* faith, which produces in them a furious *blind zeal*, and a severe uncharitable Judgment against their fellow-Christians.

The learned and pious Dr. *John Owen*, a man of known zeal for orthodoxy, shews clearly, (in his preface to his *CHRISTOLOGIA*,) that, as soon as Christians were not contented with the Scriptural securities for Truth, but employed themselves in imposing Creeds and Confessions,

for ends, which were, and still could be, much better served without them, by these Creeds the leaven of Implicit faith begun to infect the Christian Church. From him I have extracted the remarkable passages at the foot of the page. *

THat the Synodical subscription is an encroachment on CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (as all unscriptural Terms of Communion are, by my *sixth* argument for proof of our *first* proposition), I prove thus. No Candidate for the Holy Ministry is restricted, by the Law of Christ, to any precomposed Authorized *form of human words*, or to any *human Authoritative explication* or system of Divine Truths, in which very human words, or according to which human Authoritative explanation, he must of necessity confess his faith. But the synodical

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* 'The Defence of the Truth from the beginning' (says he) 'was left in charge unto, and managed by the Guides and Rulers of the Church in their several Capacities. And by the Scripture it was that they discharged their Duty; confirmed with Apostolical Tradition consonant thereunto. This was left in charge unto them by the great Apostle, *Acts xx. 28, 29, 30, 31. 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 15, 23, 24. Chap. iv. 1, 2, 3, 4.* and wherein any of them failed in this Duty, they were reprov'd by Christ himself, *Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20.*----- All true Believers in their several Stations, by mutual Watchfulness, by preaching or writing, according unto their Calls and Abilities, effectually used the outward Means for the Preservation and Propagation of the Faith of the Church. And the SAME MEANS ARE STILL SUFFICIENT unto the same Ends, were they attended unto with Conscience and Diligence, the pretended Defence of Truth with Arts and Arms of ANOTHER Kind, hath been the BANE of Religion, and *lost the Peace of Christians beyond Recovery* ----- For in Process of time, when the Power of the Roman Empire gave Countenance and Protection unto the Christian Religion, another way was fixt on for this End, namely, the use of such Assemblies of Bishops and others as they called *General Councils*, armed with a mixed Power, partly Civil and partly Ecclesiastical, with respect unto the Authority of the Emperors, and THAT JURISDICTION in the Church which BEGAN THEN to be first talk'd of. This way was begun in the Council of Nice, wherein altho' there was a Determination of the Doctrine concerning the Person of Christ then in Agitation, and oppos'd, as unto his Divine Nature therein according unto the Truth, yet sundry Evils and Inconveniencies ensued thereon. For thenceforth, the Faith of Christians began greatly to be resolv'd into the Authority of Men, and as much, if not more, Weight to be laid on what was decree'd by the Fathers then assembled, than on what was clearly taught in the Scriptures. Besides, being necessitated, as they thought, to explain their Conceptions of the Divine Nature of Christ, in Words either not used in the Scripture, or whose Signification to that Purpose was not determined therein. Occasion was given unto endless Contention about them, " Then he proceeds to show the miserable Contentions rais'd among the Orthodox by this Means, about the Word,

cal Canons for Subscription confine the Candidate either to the very human words of the Confession ; or, to the human Authoritative explanation, contained in those very human words ; and, in *both cases*, the human words of the Confession are imposed on the Candidate. For if he should substitute other words in the room of the human words of the Confession, according to the pacific Act, it must be tried whether the words substituted by him express the *very same* sentiment and Idea that is expressed by the human words of the Confession ; and, it is impossible to know this by any other rule, than by making the *human words* of the Confession the only standard and Test, according to which the Candidate's Confession must be tried ; and, this amounts to the imposing of the *individual human words* of the Confession,

Words (OUSIA) and (HYPOTASIS) among the *Greeks* ; between the *Greeks* and *Latins* about *Hypostasis, Persona, Substantia* and *Prosoyon* ; and makes this General Remark : " on this Occasion many Contests arose even among them who all pleaded their Adherence unto the Doctrine of the Council of *Nice* ; " then having shewn the Artifices of the *Arians*, and the handle they took from the Methods us'd by the Council of *Nice* to devise, and Coin words and Terms " to express their Minds with," against the Orthodox Doctrine ; he immediately adds, " and there were yet further Evils that ensued hereon. For the curious and serpentine Wits of Men finding themselves by THIS MEANS set at Liberty to think and discourse of the Blessed Trinity, and the Person of Christ, without much Regard unto plain Divine Testimonies, in such ways wherein Cunning and Sophistry did much bear Sway, begun to Multiply such new, curious and false Notions about them, especially about the Latter, as caused new Disturbances, and those of large Extent and long Continuance. For their Suppression, Councils were called on the Neck of another, whereon commonly new Occasions of Differences did arise, and most of them managed with great Scandal unto the Christian Religion. For men began much to forgo the *PRIMITIVE WAYS* of opposing Errors, and extinguishing Heresies, betaking themselves unto their Interest, the Number of their Party, and Prevalency with the present Emperors. And altho' it so fell out as in that at *Constantinople*, the first at *Ephesus*, and that at *Chalcedon*, that the Truth for the Substance of it did prevail (for in many others it happened quite otherwise) yet did they always give Occasions unto new Divisions, Animosities, and even mutual Hatreds, among the principal Leaders of the Christian People. And great Contests there were among some of them who pretended to believe the same Truth, whether SUCH or SUCH a Council shou'd be received, that is plainly, *whether the Church shou'd resolve its Faith into their Authority* " ----- " yea from the Beginning they were so far from being the only way of preserving Truth, that it was almost constantly prejudic'd by the Addition of their Authority unto the Confirmation of it. Nor was there any one of them, wherein the Mystery of Iniquity did not work, unto the laying of some Rubbish in the Foundation of that fatal Apostacy, which afterwards openly ensued."

as the ONLY STANDARD for the Confession of his Faith; whereas, his Christian Liberty gives him a Right to have the Confession of his faith tried by the *wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and not by the words *which man's wisdom teacheth*, but by the words *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, as the only Standard and Rule of the Faith confessed by him: And, what I have said is a sufficient answer to what you, perhaps, designed for an Exception to this argument, when you say p. 14. 'if the 'subscribing Body has sufficient Allowance of Christian 'Liberty with respect to Phrase or Phrases in the publick Confession, provided the Scripture Doctrine be retained, I say if the *Belfast Society*, knows this Allowance was made, as they cou'd hardly miss of knowing; 'upon that Supposition it's hard to make any thing of 'this Argument than meer Chicanery, for according to 'the Allowance made, in what is call'd the pacific Act, 'Candidates are far enough from being rigidly confined 'to a set Form of invariable and uninspired Words.

ANSW. The only Rule for trying whether the Candidate's words *retain the Christian Doctrine*, is, by comparing them with Scripture it self; but you rigidly confine the Candidate to the human words of the Confession, as the sole and exclusive standard, according to which his words are to be examined, in order to your judging whether *his words* do agree in sense with the *human words* of the Confession. If he should plead, that his words are very agreeable to the words of the Holy Ghost, that plea will do him no service, unless he can prove to your satisfaction, that *they* come fully up to the Doctrine *as it is expressed and authoritatively explained* in the uninspired words of the Confession. Whatever Liberty you may take, Sir, to call this *meer Chicanery*, it will be considered and deeply lamented as a melancholy Truth, by all who do in practice, as well as in profession, pay a just regard to the Holy Scriptures.

Having

HAVING proved the truth of our third proposition, I proceed to an Impartial Examination of all that you have advanced on the *other side* of the Question, either *directly* in your answer to this proposition, or in scattered hints you have drop'd thro' other parts of your Paper. All you answer directly to it, is in these words, *p. 16, 17.* ' Against this third Article of the Nonsubscribing Creed, I humbly offer these Exceptions, *viz.* ' I. That it's founded on false or groundless Suppositions; ' such as these, that a Candidate can satisfy his Ordainers ' without subscribing his assent to any one uninspired ' Confession of Faith, and that the blessed and only Head ' of his Church, hath given no Canon requiring men to ' profess their Assent to any uninspired Creeds, these Suppositions seems altogether groundless; for if the Candidate's, Ordainers, &c. be agreed among themselves as they ought to be, in the belief and profession of all necessary Doctrines of the common Faith of all true Christians: in that Case, the same Laws of Christ which obliged them in an associated Capacity to believe and profess, as is just now said, give them an undeniable right to require the Candidate to declare his Agreement with them in the Profession of these necessary Doctrines of Christianity, either in the same Words, or Words equally expressive of the same Doctrines; for *Christ*, the only Head of the Church, hath made a professed Assent to these necessary Doctrines, the necessary Condition of Admission to Membership in such an associated Body. ' The Result therefore of what is said is this: Either there ' is no divine Law requiring these Ordainers to make a due Profession of Christianity at all, or the Profession required of them must be an uninspired one; for uninspired Men can make no other than an uninspired Profession. It may be further added, that the Proposition here under Consideration, doth plainly condemn the known Practice of them who compiled it; for before they

‘ they receive a Candidate, they require him (I’m told)
 ‘ to deliver to his Ordainers a subscribed Confession of
 ‘ Faith of his own making, which can be no other than an
 ‘ uninspired Confession of Faith still.

The REPLY I make to your answer, is this. I deny that the proposition, contested between us, is founded upon *any false or groundless supposition*. The FIRST of the two suppositions upon which you say this proposition is founded, is this (as you express it), that a Candidate can *satisfy his ordainers without subscribing his assent to any one uninspired Confession of faith*. Were this supposition ever so groundless; nay, were the falshood of it apparent to every body, the *third* proposition is not founded on that supposition, and has no concern in it. The real supposition in our own words is this, *An Intransigent gives sufficient proof of his soundness in the faith, and of his having all the other Ministerial Qualifications and Abilities required in the Gospel, and yet refuseth to give his assent or subscription to the Westminster-Confession, or to any one uninspired Confession, as the sole and exclusive Test and Standard of orthodoxy, and term of Ministerial Communion*. This Supposition is fact, it is true, and therefore, doth not militate against the proposition that is founded upon it. The second supposition, upon which you affirm this proposition to be founded is this, (as you express it) *the Blessed and only Head of the Church hath given no Canon requiring men to profess their assent to any uninspired Creeds*. But the supposition, as it is expressed in the words of the Authors, conveys a quite different meaning. It is this. *The Blessed Head of the Church hath given no Canon requiring men to profess their assent to the Westminster-Confession, or to any ONE uninspired Confession, as the SOLE and EXCLUSIVE Test and Standard of orthodoxy, and Term of Ministerial Communion*. The supposition, in the words of the Authors, is a plain Truth, and I have proved the truth of it from p. 38, to p. 69. To convince you of
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your mistake, if possible, give me leave to apply your argument, in your own words, to the two suppositions, not as wrong stated by you, but as justly stated by me in the words of their Authors. Your argument will run thus. 'the result therefore of what is said is this: Either 'there is no Divine Law, requiring those ordained to 'make a due profession of Christianity at all, or the profession required of them must be an uninspired one, in 'the words of the Westminster-Confession, or some other 'uninspired Confession, subscribed as the sole and exclusive 'Test and standard of orthodoxy, or Term of Ministerial 'Communion; for uninspired men can make no other than 'an uninspired profession, in some imposed exclusive Test of 'orthodoxy. It may be further added, that the proposition 'here under consideration doth plainly condemn the known 'practice of them who compiled it; for before they receive 'a Candidate, they require him (I'm told) to deliver to 'his ordainers a subscribed Confession of faith of his own 'making, which can be no other than an uninspired Confession of Faith still, imposed on him in the same manner 'as the Westminster-Confession is imposed by the Synod, as 'the sole and exclusive Test and standard of orthodoxy, 'and Term of ministerial Communion' You see, Sir, that when your own reasoning is applied to the suppositions, upon which the proposition is truly founded, it has no manner of force. The fallacy of it lies here. You confound every uninspired profession of men's faith with a sole exclusive Test and standard of orthodoxy, and term of Communion; tho' they are as different as any two things can well be. The first is unavoidable; for all Christians are bound to make a sincere profession of Christianity, tho' in making of that profession they are not inspired, as the Apostles were; but no Christian is bound to make his profession of Christianity in the human words of an imposed Authoritative explanation of it, or in any words that

that must be tried by the *human words* of any such *Imposed* Test and Term of Communion. And the presbytery of *Antrim* prescribe no such human Test to their Candidates, but examine the Religious profession made by THEM, *not* by the *imposed standard* of an Authorized human form, but by the Scriptures, as the only Rule of Faith.

The very same mistake runs through the whole of your reasoning in your *third Exception* against the *first* proposition, *p. 9, 10, 11.* This exception you apply to our *third* proposition, now under consideration; and, therefore, it comes in here, in it's proper place, to be examined. You begin it *p. 9*, where you say, 'This Proposition seems to be of a dangerous Tendency; for if uninspired Men have no Right to oblige such as claim religious Communion with them to subscribe to any Number of Christian Doctrines, collected by fallible Men from the Holy Scriptures; then these two dangerous Inconveniencies will ensue. 1st, The Necessity of a credible Profession of Christianity, to qualify Men for Christian Communion, must be given up altogether; and they must be admitted to partake of the Seals of the Christian Covenant, who don't give sufficient Evidence of their being Christians, by a satisfactory Profession of all the Essentials of true Christianity; for if such a Profession be made at all, it must still be made by uninspired Men; and though Christian Doctrines were originally given by immediate Revelation, yet ordinary Professors of Christianity are not, in the Profession they make, under the same infallible Direction with the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures; it's very plain then, that uninspired Men can make no other than an uninspired Confession of Faith either for themselves or others; but according to this Proposition, no more Profession is to be required of any, but only, to own in general, that the Holy Scriptures are a perfect, and the only infallible Rule of Christian Faith and Practice.

To all this reasoning, this short and clear answer is sufficient, *viz.* I grant that a Credible profession of Christianity, a satisfactory profession of all its essential Doctrines, is necessary to qualify men for Christian Communion, But I deny the necessity of confining this Credible profession to the *human words of a sole and exclusive* Test of orthodoxy, or to any words that must be tried by the human words of *any such* Imposed Test. I have proved that Candidates for the Ministry may sufficiently prove their soundness in the faith, *without any such* Imposed human Test, and so may private Christians. But your argument, if it proves any thing at all, it points at the necessity of the Synod's imposing some exclusive human Test of orthodoxy upon *all Communicants*; a Doctrine that ought to be strenuously opposed, (I had almost said ABHORRED) by all who value the *Communion of saints*. It is high time for all Christians, within the Synodical Association, to watch against all encroachments on their Christian privileges, when you have given so plain a hint from the press, that neither man nor woman, old or young, can be judged worthy of a seat at the Lord's Table, nor capable of Communion with Christ and His Body, in that holy ordinance, without submission to some human exclusive Test of orthodoxy. When once an Imposing spirit is got loose, no body can tell when and where it will stop. You do us great injustice in affirming, that *according to this proposition, no more profession is to be required of any, but only to own in general, that the Holy Scriptures are a perfect, and the only Infallible Rule of Christian faith and practice.* This is a meer Fiction of your own. The proposition says no such thing. For reasons I have given in the 31st and 32^d pages of this Defence, the proposition has not mentioned the particular Doctrines which are, by the Gospel, made necessary to be professed as Terms of Communion; because the doing of that would have fixed on it's Authors the guilt of a

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vile calumny, viz. that the Subscribers deny these Doctrines. But, because we do not specify these Doctrines in a proposition where it would have been a fault to have done it, to affirm that *according to this proposition none of these Doctrines ought to be professed*, is a manifest wresting of the plain words of the proposition; and, amounts to no more, than if you had said, that *this proposition do's not recite the particular Doctrines of Christianity*; and, therefore, *according to this proposition a profession of these particular Doctrines ought not to be required*. This is not arguing, but trifling.

You proceed in your exception, p. 10, 11. where you say, 'Another dangerous Consequence of this and the other Propositions is, that all, even the most useful Summaries of Christian Faith, collected by uninspired Men, must for ever be laid aside; we must make a tame Surrender of our *Westminster*-Confession and Catechisms, to the Disposal of the *Belfast* Society; for these being the Compositions of uninspired Men, we cannot impose them on ourselves or others; without invading the whole Headship of *Christ*: and if none be obliged to own them, they must drop of course; but the only fair Way of taking them from us would be, to prove their Disconformity in less or more to Holy Scripture; and then such as now adhere to them might see just Reason to alter their Opinion, and to part with every thing which hath not Scripture Authority to warrant its being retained in the Terms of ministerial Communion; yet they, who having impartially examined these Collections of reformed Principles, and finding them conformable to the Word of God; and have accordingly associated themselves to stand for the Defence thereof by all Christian Methods; such wou'd be exceedingly to blame, shou'd they renounce that Association for any thing offer'd in the six Propositions to determine them to do so: Nay, by the plain Tendency of this Proposition taken in connection

‘ with the rest, not only the *Westminster*-Confession, but,
 ‘ indeed, all the Protestant Confessions in all the reformed
 ‘ Churches must, in like manner, be suppress’d ; and, by
 ‘ that means, Protestantism itself must be bury’d ; for the
 ‘ very Form of Protestantism consisted in a free and uni-
 ‘ ted Subscription to the respective Confessions of Faith,
 ‘ compil’d by these Reformers ; containing their reform-
 ‘ ed Principles and Reasons of their Separation from the
 ‘ Church of *Rome* ; so that the Scheme of Nonsubscripti-
 ‘ on to all Confessions of Faith of human Composure in
 ‘ the Height to which it seems to be carried by the *Belfast*
 ‘ Society, seems to be no other than a bold Protestation
 ‘ against Protestantism itself.

ANSW. I. The very propositions you are arguing a-
 gainst, do expressly affirm, that neither the *Westminster*-
 Confession, nor any other uninspired Confession, ought
 to be imposed as *Sole and Exclusive Tests* of orthodoxy and
 as terms of Ministerial Communion ; because all of them
 are *unscriptural* Terms of Communion ; and, therefore,
 for you to say, that the dangerous consequence of those
 propositions, is, that all these exclusive Tests and Con-
 fessions must *for ever be laid aside*, (as terms of Commu-
 nion, you must mean, or say nothing to the purpose),
 is a shameful *begging of the Question*, and has not the
 shadow of Argument. The proposition says, that they
 ought never to be used or imposed as Terms of Com-
 munion, and thence you infer that they must be for ever
 laid aside. ANSW. II. In this *Defence*, in my humble
 opinion, I have taken a fair way to convince you by ar-
 guments from Scripture and Reason, that your imposition
 of the Confession as a term of Communion, is an act of
 a proper Legislative power, which by the Express Laws
 of Christ you are discharged from exercising ; and, that
 in violation of these Laws, you have established an un-
 scriptural Term of Communion, which is an act of dis-
 obedience to these Laws of the Redeemer (tho’, I am
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persuaded, you do not think so) and therefore *Sinful*; and, therefore, you ought to lay aside those unscriptural Terms, *and this is* (to use your own Phrase) *a fair way of taking them from you, by shewing their disconformity to Holy Scripture.*

ANSW. III. I cannot agree in opinion with you, that by the laying aside the Imposition of all human Confessions, as terms of Communion in the protestant Churches, *protestantism it self would be buried*; and that our scheme of Non-Subscription seems to be no other than *a bold protestation against protestantism it self*. On the contrary, I cannot but think, that if those *Confessional walls of partition*, (which have divided the protestant Churches into different Communions, and which have introduced and continued schisms and contentions among them, to the weakening of the PROTESTANT Interest, and the dishonour of Christianity it self), were happily removed, the REFORMATION would soon arrive at greater perfection, and primitive Christianity would be revived, on it's true foundation, on which Christ and his Apostles have placed it, and left it. True PROTESTANTISM, can be nothing else but the *Religion of the BIBLE*; the Religion of Christ, revealed more obscurely in the OLD, and more clearly and fully in the NEW Testament. This Religion subsisted, in it's greatest purity, and power over the hearts and lives of Christians, three hundred years *without any Imposed human Tests*; and, I can see no reason, why pure religion would not subsist as well, if THEY were all laid aside, as it did *before* any of them was *imposed*: Nay, I think it evident, that it would greatly contribute to the confirmation and propagation of Truth, and to the purging out of the Christian World the most dangerous Errors and Heresies, if NONE of them were Imposed as *Terms of Communion*. The necessary consequence would be, that NO ERROR NO HERESY could be imposed on any Pastor, or Member of the Christian Church.

Church. For, if you take away all Imposed Human Creeds and Confessions, there can be no imposed Heresy or Error. And, if no Heresy or Error be imposed, you effectually destroy the greatest support and strength that Error ever had, next to the corruption of human Nature. Error cannot stand against the power and evidence of Divine Truth, when a free Inquiry into it, is encouraged, and when Error has no Sanction from Authoritative Church-Creeds. All the Idolatry, Heresy, Superstition, and Tyranny of the Church of *Rome* has been introduced and continued, by the Imposition of these Abominations in their Public Creeds. Had these never been, Popery had never existed. Take these away, and Popery must fall faster than it rose. In the *protestant* Churches, how beautiful would the REFORMATION appear, if it could be said with Truth, that there is *not one single Error imposed in any one of them*. But, it is not to be expected in this state of Imperfection, when the best do *know but in part, and see but in part*, that this will ever be true, until all their human Creeds be drop'd out of their Terms of Communion, in which they ought never to have had a place.

If it be said, that if any Church impose Heresy or Error in their Creeds, this is *their fault*, it is an abuse of their power; but this is no sufficient reason, why Creeds that impose no Error should be laid aside; and, the more zealous Hereticks and erroneous persons are, in imposing their Errors, the more zealous ought we to be, for imposing the Important Truths in our Confession. ANSW. The Argument would be very just, if the Churches had any power from Christ, to impose any human Confessions; but I have shown that they have no such power, and that they are forbid to assume or exercise any such power. The cause of Truth is not to be supported by the weapons, and Grand Pillars of Error. We are not to make unscriptural Terms of

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Communion, tho' they should be honestly designed for the service of Truth it self. We must not invade Christs prerogative, encroach on the Rights of Conscience, be guilty of Schism, Superstition, giving offence, and destroying Christian Liberty, on any pretence whatsoever. Had our Saviour thought it necessary, for the service of Truth, that human Confessions should be imposed, he would have empowered his servants to do it. He knew perfectly, *what Heresies and Errors* would break out in the Church, and both He and his Apostles warned Christians against them, *Matth. vii. 15. Acts xx. 28, 29, 30. 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5.* And, yet not the least hint is given in the sacred writings of the necessity of *imposed human Tests* against them. Had not he known the sufficiency of the sacred Oracles, for such purposes, he would have added to the Divine Revelation he gave the world, some farther Illustrations of the Truths it contains. No Christian will deny, that our Blessed Saviour, or his Inspired Apostles, could have made and imposed (if it had been necessary) a far better Creed and Confession than any that could be made by the council of *Nice*, or the *Westminster-Assembly*, or any other uninspired men. If he could have done this, and yet has not done it, we must conclude that he saw no necessity for doing it, and that he knew the Gospel-Securities for the Defence and propagation of Divine Truth, were, by his own Blessing, and the aid of His Spirit, *perfectly Sufficient* for these ends, when duly attended to, and diligently used by his faithful servants. There is no Promise of a Blessing on the use of Imposed Human Confessions; and no Blessing can be expected, in the use of what has no Divine appointment. Nothing can serve the cause of Truth, but what proposeth the native evidence and sole Authority upon which the understanding assents to it, and upon which the Conscience applies it to the purposes of Religious Faith and Obedience. Now an Imposition of
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the most Important Truths, by Human Authority, carries no Argument for enlightening the understanding, nor binding the Conscience. The voice of Right reason, and the clear Testimony of God, *who cannot lie*, given in a Revelation of His Mind, are the only Arguments for Persuasion in all such cases. What good, then, can the Imposition of the most orthodox Creed or Confession that ever was (and, I add, that can be) composed by fallible men, do for the Confirmation and propagation of Divine Truth? Can Imposition beget, in the mind of him on whom that truth is imposed, a Divine Faith, when neither Reason nor Revelation have any influence on his Judgment? If it begets in him a profession of faith, without inward conviction, (as, it often do's) it can serve no other purpose, but first to debauch his Conscience, and then to let him and all other dissemblers croud into the Church, under a mask of Orthodoxy; and, whether such men are to be depended upon, as good advocates for Truth, let the world judge; and, it excludes honest men and the real friends of Truth, meerly because they have not freedom to subscribe Imposed Human Tests of it. In the mean time, it kindles a fire, sets the Church of God in a flame and fills the Imposers, who are generally impatient of contradiction, with a furious Zeal for the honour of their Synods and Councils, and engages the POSSE of a whole Church in their quarrel; intimidating and browbeating men of modesty with noise and clamour, and running them down with the dint of authority, with VOTES instead of ARGUMENTS. Such as have read the History of Synods and Councils can confirm this melancholy account of them. The great Mr. *Baxter's* History of THEM is a clear demonstration of it. No great success, for discovering and propagating the Truth, can be reasonably expected from men whose passions are inflamed, and whose prejudices are raised to such a height. A calm dispassionate mind, duly cultivated by Christian

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Diligence and the Grace of God, is the best Soil in which the *incorruptible seed* of the word of God, the *word of Truth*, can be sown and cherished, until it brings forth the fruits of Righteousness, one of the best securities of the *Doctrine according to Godliness*. It gives the friends of Truth and Liberty great pleasure, that of late years divers of the protestant Churches are laying aside their human *Confessional Tests*. For, beside GENEVA (of which I have taken notice, p. 36.) the famous protestant Churches of HELVETIA have cast off the Yoke, and given Truth a fair hearing; that it may be received with a truly Divine Faith, (like that of the noble Bereans who received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so, and therefore many of them believed, Acts xvii. 11, 12.), free from an unnatural mixture of a great deal of implicit human faith which ariseth from the authority of men; that always hurts, and can never help, the cause of Truth. These Churches were not afraid, it seems, of *burying Protestantism* by what they have done. No, they have taken the most effectual way to give it new Life and vigour, by *burying Imposition*.

You apply to our *third* proposition, now under debate, your *fourth* Exception against the *first*; which I am to examine here, as in it's proper place. You begin it, P. 1. in these words, IV. A fourth Exception against this Proposition is, that it is very unkind and uncharitable; for it carries in it a strong Insinuation, that they who contend for publick confession of Faith, and use them otherwise than the *Belfast* Society wou'd have them, they are justly chargeable with usurping the legislative Power of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, with making new Terms of Christian Communion, not knowing the Holy Scriptures: In fine, they are as good as charged with setting up a Sort of Protestant Popery. ANSW. I am sorry that you should take offence at a practice, which all men of

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sense and Learning have thought very *fair* and *reasonable*, in controversial writings; that is, that an author should charge the Doctrine maintained by his Adversary with *all the Absurd* Consequences, which appears to him to follow naturally from it. Indeed, to charge an adversary with *seeing* those absurd Consequences, and with holding a Doctrine from whence *he knows* them to follow, is to charge him with dishonesty and with a wicked insincerity. But this we have *never done*, we have never charged the Imposers of publick Confessions of Faith with *seeing and believing themselves* to be usurpers of the Legislative power of Christ, with imposing Terms of Communion, which themselves know to be unscriptural, (except in the case of those who expressly claim such a power) nor with as good as setting up what *they know* to be protestant popery. But, seeing we believe the absurd Consequences we mention, to be the native Consequences of the principles avowed by our Adversaries in this Controversy, it is so far from being *unkind* and *uncharitable*, that it is really both *kind* and *charitable* in us, to set them fairly before our Opponents, in the Light in which they appear to our own minds; and an Act of justice to our Characters, to lay them before the world, in necessary Self-Defence. This answer I rely upon, as a just Apology, not only upon the subject and occasion on which it is now offered, but for many things I have said, and shall have occasion to say, in *this Defence*, where the application will be easy and obvious to every discerning Reader. After an exaggerating complaint of our being unkind and uncharitable, for which there is no foundation, and after a sovereign contempt of all our printed writings, without giving yourself the trouble of refuting them, you proceed in your Exception (*Ibid.* where speaking of us you say, 'for they cannot but know, that the Subscribing Body, to whom they have given so much Trouble, do claim two Scripture Rules

to warrant their Conduct; the first is, that all Christians ought to hold the Foundation, and to make sure of a credible Profession of the essential Doctrines of Christianity, as is plain from 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12. *For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Now if any Man build upon this Foundation, Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, Stubble: Rom. x. 10. *For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one Hope of your Calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

ANSW. How this Scripture Rule will justify the Synod's conduct, in the point under debate, I cannot see; and, you give me no assistance for finding it out. There is no necessity, in order to our holding the foundation, and for making sure a Credible profession of Christianity, that there should be any *Imposed human Test*, as I have fully proved in the preceding part of this Defence. The Texts of Scripture you quote say nothing to your purpose, but some of them are rather applicable to the other side of the Question. If with the *mouth confession was made unto Salvation*, in St. Paul's days, when there was no *human Imposed Test*, in the words whereof the mouth could *then confess*, we have a very good precedent for requiring no other way of Confessing our faith *now* than what was judged sufficient *then*. If the Body of Christ be ONE, there ought to be NO SCHISM in it, and, consequently no human Exclusive Tests, which have constantly and necessarily created Schisms, from the very first of them at the Council of Nice, to the last of them in the present Age. The *one faith*, was the *faith once delivered to the saints*, which must be either the Great Truths of Christianity, or the Gospel which hath revealed them, or both. And this *one faith* then subsisted, and

a sufficient Credible profession of it was made, some hundreds of years before any Imposed Human Confession of Faith was in being. And, it must be high presumption in *uninspired* men to pronounce that profession of the *one faith* to be insufficient *now*, which the *inspired* Apostles declared to be sufficient *then*. How it should ever come into your Head, to quote three Texts of scripture, for justifying the Synodical subscription, when *one* of them says *nothing for you*, and *two* of them a great deal *against you* is best known to yourself. The application you make of this *first Rule*, is a little surprizing; you express it thus, p. 10 'Upon the first Rule, the subscribing body are ready, as far as opportunity, and the *necessary Laws of Christian prudence* will permit, to joyn in 'Religious Communion with all who make a Credible 'profession of the necessary Doctrines of the common faith 'of true Christians, and have a Conversation, consistent with 'that profession.' I expected something from you here, in defence of the Synods impositions, supported by your *first Scripture Rule*; but you don't so much as attempt it. I observe, that you make the subscribers joyning in religious Communion with others, even where a Credible profession is made of the necessary Doctrines of the Common Faith, accompanied with a Conversation consistent with it, to depend upon the *necessary Laws of Christian prudence*; by this means, you may break Communion, as often as you shall think it prudent to do it; you may disobey the positive Laws of Christ, which command you to hold Communion with all who are qualified for it and entitled to it, by the Laws of the Gospel. The Command of Christ has not left it to your prudence, to determine whether you ought to hold or break Communion with any one. The Conditions of Communion are invariably fixed in the Gospel, and you can't refuse Communion to any who comply with them. This principle of yours establisheth an Arbitrary power of breaking thro' the Great

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Laws of the Redeemer, and supposeth that there may be some cases wherein the keeping of them may be *against the necessary Laws* of Christian prudence; which is an injurious reflection upon the Divine Laws and their Author, as if you were wiser than He, and could by your prudence correct and amend THEM. If there be any such cases as you suppose either Christ foresaw them, or he did not; to assert the *latter*, is to deny his Omniscience; and, therefore, you must grant that he perfectly knew them. If so, then he has given us Laws which Himself knew would want the Correction of Human prudence. This is, in effect to make our Saviour say, *I command you to live in Communion with all who make a Credible profession of my Religion, and who live suitable to that profession; but, notwithstanding of this Law, I leave it to your own prudence, whether you will obey or disobey my order.* I do not think that your defence of the *Subscribing Body* do's them any Honour; and I will do it the justice, as to declare, that I do not believe they agree in Judgment with you in this particular.

The Second Scripture Rule claimed by the Subscribing Body for warranting their conduct (as you represent it p. 12) is this, 'The second Rule is, That Christians, having secur'd these first Principles of reveal'd Religion, ought to go on to Perfection; that is, make the best Proficiency they can, by the Grace of God, in useful Knowledge, and the Discovery of evangelical Truths, which, though not of equal Importance with the known Essentials of Christianity, yet may be of considerable use to promote Reformation by their influence upon Christian Practice; and their Connections with the Laws of Christ. See Heb. vi. 1. *Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God.* 2 Pet. iii. 18. *But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,*

Christ, &c ANSW. This Rule do's no service to your Cause. For we may go on to perfection, and grow in knowledge, without any subscription to the *Westminster-Confession*, or any other human Confession, imposed as a *sole and exclusive Test of orthodoxy*. I should rather think that this Scripture Rule is against you. For an Imposed subscription to human Confessions discourages a free and impartial *searching of the Scriptures*, which is one of the most necessary means of our growth in Christian knowledge, and of our *going on to perfection*. For any one who has subscribed any of these human Confessions, according to the *Formulas* usually prescribed in the Churches that Impose them, is laid under very great *Difficulties* and *Discouragements* in the study of the Scriptures. For if he should review his subscription, and find some Article *false*, which he thought *true* when he subscribed it, (a case very supposable, where men are honest and Impartial in their Enquiries) he is laid under this DILEMMA; either, he must conceal his opinion, and stifle the discovery he has made of Divine Truth; which, if discovered, might propagate truth, and do real service for the increase of Christian knowledge; and so his Conscience is graveled by an omission of his duty: or, if he should vent his opinion, and support it by arguments, a cry of error, or perhaps, heresy is raised against him, and the bulk of people will never go farther in their Enquiries, than to try whether he has contradicted an article of their peculiar favourite Confession: whereas if there were *no such Imposed Test*, all people would freely examine his Doctrine by the BIBLE; and would either receive or reject it, according, to the true evidence of the *Law and the Testimony*. And, by this means, *knowledge would increase*. Having shown you, that this Scripture Rule is so far from warranting, that it condemns the conduct of the Synod, I will endeavour to show you, that your application of it is nothing to your purpose. You apply it (p. 13)

in the following words. ' Asto the second Rule of Scripture, we think we have an inviolable Claim to the Rights of private Judgment, equally with all Christians; especially these who are in the holy Ministry, in associating ourselves for the necessary Defence of that Collection of Scripture Doctrines, fairly contain'd in the *Westminster*-Confession; to the joint Belief whereof we have attain'd, by the Blessing of God upon our impartial Enquiries after Truth; we look on these Doctrines as the Doctrines of *Jesus*, which are according to Godliness, of greater or lesser Importance to our own or our Christian People's Edification; and one wou'd readily think that other Christian Societies, have as good a Right to associate to the best Advantage they can, as the *Belfast* Society can pretend to. If any are of Sentiments contrary to ours, we are far enough from imposing the Terms of our voluntary and private Association upon them; but if they will make any Attempt to impose upon us a Scheme of unlimited Communion, ever since of our Association, before-mentioned; in that case we have better Reason, to adopt the Apostle's Words, *Gal. ii. 5.* than the *Belfast* Society; and not to give place by subjection to the Presbytery of *Antrim*, no not for an Hour, that the Truth of the Gospel may be continued.

ANSW. I. In what you have said, you have dropt the scripture Rule out of your argument; and, advanced another plea in it's stead, of a different nature, *viz.* your claim to the Rights of private Judgment. Had you stuck by the scripture Rule, you should have proved, that our obligation to *grow in knowledge* and to *go on to perfection* do's justify *your exclusive Test*. But this you wave prudently enough. You amuse your Reader, in making a specious pretence to scripture Rules from which you don't so much as attempt to form an Argument.

ANSW. II. That all Christians, whether you consider each individual person separately, or whether you consider them as forming

ing themselves into Societies for serving the purposes of Christianity, have a just claim to the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment, I freely grant, you are at full Liberty to make the best you can of this Concession. But, you'll find, that this Argument is of full force against you. For I have already proved, that *all unscriptural Terms* of Communion are a grievous encroachment on the Rights of Conscience and private Judgment, (p. 14, 15, 16.), and that all *human Exclusive Tests* of Divine Truths are unscriptural Terms of Communion, and I have shown, wherein they do evidently encroach on these Rights, (p. 43, 44, 45.) to which I refer you. You seem to be very scarce of arguments for your Cause, when you are under a necessity of pressing arguments into it's service, which are directly against it. ANSW. III. It is impossible, that the Synod's Right of private Judgment can give them any Power or Authority to trample on the Rights of others ; for every Christian has an equal Right of Conscience and private Judgment, with that of a General Council, for he has a Right to examine all their Decrees and Doctrines by the word of God, and to *receive* or *reject* them, as he shall find just cause, as they are *agreeable* or *disagreeable* to that perfect and only Rule of Faith. This is the only principle on which PROTESTANTISM can stand ; for if you take it away, the REFORMATION falls with it. Therefore, the General Synod can have no Right to infringe the Rights of our Conscience and private Judgment, as they actually do by their *Exclusive Test*. ANSW. IV. All the Right of private Judgment that truly belongs to the Synod in this affair, is, to judge for themselves, but not for others, whether the propositions contained in the *Westminster-Confession* be true or false. But the debate between the Synod and us, is not whether the Confession be all true, and free from Error ; but, whether the Synod have a Right to impose *that Authoritative Explanation* of Divine Truths, and the very human Words containing it, as a

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Term of Communion. To do this, is not a judging *for themselves only* (which I acknowledge to be their Right) but a judging *for all others*, on whom they Impose their Exclusive Test, to which they have no manner of Right. And it is but a meer playing or quibbling upon words, to call this a *Right of private Judgment*, when it amounts to a claim of an *Athoritative public Judgment*, designed to determine the Judgment and practice of *others*, under a very severe penalty, if they will not Conform to it. It is an uncommon degree of assurance in you to assert, that *if any are of sentiments contrary to yours, you are far enough from imposing the Terms of your voluntary and private association upon them*. If you have ever read the Acts of your General Synods, recited in this DEFENCE, p. 38, 39, 40, 41. you must see the notorious falshood of your own allegation. In these Acts, a subscription to the Confession is imposed on all Candidates, upon pain of their being denied LICENCE, ORDINATION or INSTALLMENT; upon pain of SUSPENSION to the Minister presiding, and of DESPOSITION to the person ordained, and under a penalty on *all the Congregations* within the Synod, that they shall have no Ministers from you, unless they will chuse *subscribers only*. If this be not imposing your sentiments on others, I think it impossible for you to give *one single instance* of an IMPOSITION within the visible Church. Pray, what has any Church upon earth done, that may be called an *Imposition of their sentiments* upon others, but what the General Synod has done? The Imposers have commanded certain Doctrines, as they have *authoritatively explained* them, to be professed, and certain things to be done, which they specify in some Canon or Law, established by the Sanction of rewards and punishments; which punishments are inflicted in case of disobedience, and which rewards they distribute upon a Conformity to their Laws. The Synod has done all this; and it is not in the power of any Church upon earth to do

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more, to deserve the Character of being IMPOSERS of their own sentiments upon *others* than to punish others for *not thinking as the Imposers think*, and for not acting as the Imposers command them to act.

If you should urge, that your Judgment leads you to Impose the *Westminster*-Confession upon all Candidates &c. and to secure subscription to it by all the penalties annexed to your Laws, and this Imposition is an action of yours, of which you must have a power to judge and that it would be a sin in you not to impose it, when you look on yourselves bound in Conscience to do it. (Thus, I have put your argument in a much stronger Light than you have done yourself.) In answer to this Difficulty, I would earnestly beseech all my Reverend Brethren, who pretend to justify their conduct upon this foundation, to consider seriously these few things. *First*, As I must suppose this to be an erring Conscience, that has put you upon these imposing divisive measures you have gone into for some years, it is I think your Duty before God to re-examine your own conduct, to be patient of contradiction, to consider calmly what has been said on both sides of the Question, and to divest yourselves of all prejudices, that you may be open to conviction, and not ashamed to own your mistake, upon your being better informed; which has always been the practice of all wise and good men. Let me conjure you by the Honour of the Lord Redeemer, whose *Royal Supremacy* and *Sole Legislative* power cannot be usurped without heinous guilt, by the bowels of Compassion and mercy you ought to have for the oppressed Consciences of your Brethren, by your pity for the bleeding wounds of the Body of Christ received by the schism and rent you have made in it, by your inviolable regard to the Holy Scriptures which are dishonoured by the superstitious regard paid to the human words of any Imposed Test, by the danger of giving offence and laying a *stumbling-block* in the way

of your Brethren, and by the regard you ought to have for the *Liberty wherein you are commanded to stand fast*; Let me conjure you, I say, to review your past conduct towards us. You are now got out of the heat of Synodical Disputations, on these heads. Eighteen years time might be sufficient to give you coolness of temper and pacific dispositions. Our Debates have not turned on points of meer speculation; they are Important *points of practice*, upon which the peace and unity of the Christian Church depend. Excuse I beseech you, the freedom of this Address, which is the effect of a fervent undissembled Love and zeal for your happiness, and for the *peace of JERUSALEM*. I have no other way left me of communicating my sentiments to you, than in this public manner, the relation I once stood in to you having ceased. I assure you, that I esteemed it an *Honour* to be a *member of your Body*, but a GREATER HONOUR to be *cast out* of it for my attachment to the Glorious Cause of Christian Liberty. To me it is *given not only to believe, but to suffer for Christ* and his cause. Secondly, I grant, that while this Error of Judgment remains, no power upon earth has a Right to controul it, so as to compell you to act against the deliberate dictates of your own mind. But, *Thirdly*, Tho' you should think your selves obliged in Conscience to impose your Exclusive Human Tests upon others, it will not follow, that the Judgment you form is true and just. And you can have no right to associate for the defence of what is false in it self and injurious to the Rights of other men's Consciences. The arguments for proof of your violating the Divine Law by your Impositions are strong and conclusive; and a great deal of difference is to be made between an error of Judgment that affects no body but the man himself who errs, and an Error that deprives others of the priviledges of the Gospel-Charter. There is great guilt before God in rejecting any of Christs faithful servants whom he has commanded you to re-

ceive. The Revelation is plain that forbids you to do this, and, therefore, your Error in Judgment, tho' it may extenuate, will not absolve you from that guilt. You must answer for it at the Great Day of Final Judgment, where your plea, of your doing this from Ignorance and Error, will not be sustained as a justifiable cause of your conduct. All persecutors make the same plea; they think they are doing God Service, when they kill men for Conscience sake. Perjury, murder and lying are justified by some, for the good of the Church; and their Rights of private Judgment are pleaded in defence of all these atrocious Crimes; which evidently proves, that no plea from the Rights of private Judgment can justify a mans doing a bad action that is oppressive to his neighbour, even tho' it should appear to him that do's it to be just and Laudable. ANSW. V. You charge us very unjustly with an *attempt to Impose upon you a Scheme of unlimited Communion* when you know it to be our professed principle, and practice too, to reject from Communion all whom our Blessed Lord hath commanded us to reject. Our sentiments of Christian Discipline are clearly expressed in our Essay on Church-Authority, published in 1731 in these words p. 70, 71 'Christian Discipline may be term'd a Divine Institution, appointed by our Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of His Church, for preserving the *Purity of Religion* and Religious *Communion*, for the Reformation of the Scandalous, and the Consolation of the Penitent. For which Ends, the Laws of Christ command and oblige *all* Christians and Christian Societies, to refuse all unnecessary familiar Conversation, and *Religious Communion* and the *Tokens* of it, to every profess'd Christian who shall upon clear and sufficient Evidence be convicted of any Error or immoral practice, which (*according to the Gospel-Law*) doth *disqualify* Christians for Religious Communion, and

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render them unworthy of it. And the Laws of Christ do oblige and command *all* Christians and Christian Societies, to receive again into Religious Communion all who have been justly excommunicated, upon their making a *credible Profession* of Repentance, and shewing the *visible Fruits* of it. Our Account of Christian Discipline is confirm'd from *Matth.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. *1 Cor.* v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13. *2 Cor.* ii. 6, 7. *Gal.* vi. 1. *2 Thess.* iii. 6, 7, 14, 15. *1 Tim.* i. 19, 20. *2 Tim.* ii. 17, 18. *1 Tim.* v. 19, 20. *1 Tim.* vi. 3, 4, 5. *2 Tim.* iii. 2, --- 5. *Tit.* iii. 10, 11. *2 Joh.* 9, 10, 11. *Rev.* ii. 2, 14, 15, 20.

THESE Passages of Scripture prove, that scandalous Members of the Church, duly convicted, and remaining impenitent, ought to be cast out; as the Incestuous *Corinthian* was; being as much disqualified for Religious Communion, as Heathens. We are Commanded to tell them their faults, to tell the Church, to receive Accusations, to try, to admonish, to rebuke, to reject, to note, to shame, to bewail, to withdraw, to put away, not to eat nor keep company with them, but to purge out such Leaven: And to comfort and forgive them, upon their Repentance. All this ought to be done, that others may fear; that the whole Lump may not be leavened with infectious, and scandalous Errors and Immoralities; that the offending Brother may be gain'd, and that his Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus. Pray, sir, is this a scheme of unlimited Communion? and wherein do the presbytery of Antrim require any subjection at your hand? and, therefore, with what face can you pretend to adopt the Apostles words, *Gal.* ii. 5, as a plea against them who are imposing nothing upon you? For us against whom all the Impositions are leveled, to use it as a clear proof of the Rights and Liberties of the Christian Church, was natural and just.

There is a couple of straggling sentences in your paper,

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on which you seem to lay some stress for justifying the Synod's imposed subscription. The *first* of them, is in these words, *p.* 14. 'If it be alledged, that Imposing of a set Form of Doctrines is unwarrantable, we can't help alledging to the contrary that Christian Truths have Christ's own Authority to warrant the Imposition of them.' The *second* is in these words, *p.* 15. 'In the Imposition of Formulas of true Christian Faith, Christ himself (whose Truths, these contained in such Formulas are) is the Blessed Imposer' ANSW. I. Granting, that those Formulas contain Truth, it will not follow, that Christ is the Imposer of the *human Formulas* in which truth is expressed. The Human Formula is imposed by *Fallible men*, as a Term of Communion, for which they have no authority from the Laws of Christ; neither is it true, that Christian Truths have Christ's own Authority to warrant the Imposition of them. Christian Truths have indeed, Christ's Authority to warrant the belief of them; but they have not Christ's Authority to empower fallible men to form and impose an *Authoritative explication* of them upon *others*. And this is the only thing that can be called Imposing of Christian Truths, or rather of what we apprehend and believe to be Christian Truths. It is the Duty of every Minister to interpret the Laws of God to his hearers, according to the best of his understanding. But to impose his own Expositions and Sermons would be to make himself Lord of their faith, to assume to himself a Dominion over their faith, which belongs to none but to our Lord Jesus Christ. ANSW. II. It is absolutely false that any men have a power to require the profession of *every Christian Truth*, as a Term of Communion. The scriptures are designed for the Benefit of all mankind. In them there are high and sublime Truths, which will exercise the greatest Genius, employ the strongest Capacity, and be work enough for the greatest degree of skill and

and learning. And men of those rare qualities and talents may discover *many Truths* in them, which others, of a lower size of understanding, of a meaner Education, and who are inevitably deprived of their leisure and opportunities, can never find out, nor even perceive the evidence of, after they are detected by men of a superior Genius. There are a great many just Consequences from Scripture, which are not equally evident to all, which a great many cannot see at all. Now, it would be cruel and uncharitable, to impose all these deductions of human reasoning, as terms of Communion, upon the Disciples of Christ, who commands us to *receive the weak in the faith but not to doubtful disputations*. Nay, it is utterly uncharitable to impose them upon the *Strong*; because many who deserve *that* Character CANNOT see them, and may be of a different mind, very consistently with true piety, good sense and solid Learning. The Apostle Paul gave an inspired decision on the debates between the Jewish and Gentile Converts. *I know* (says he Rom. xiv. 14.) *and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is nothing unclean of it self*. But did he allow the profession of *this Truth* to be imposed, as a Term of Communion, and the Imposers to break Communion with the Jewish Christians on that score? No. He strictly forbids it. ANSW. III. Upon the principles you have here advanced, the greatest corrupters of Christianity have played the surest game, for the propagation and continuance of their most pernicious Errors; all which they have Imposed, under the Notion of *Christian Truths*. For if once they believe, that they have a power of Imposing *every Christian Truth*, they must have a power of judging *what is* Christian Truth, in order to the Execution of a power which you grant them. Were this no more than the abuse of a proper power granted them by the Gospel-Charter, I would not pretend to make an argument of it. But it is chargeable not on the *abuse*, but on the

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usurpation of a power, which they *have not received*, and which they assume and exercise, WITHOUT and AGAINST the Authority of Christ. And, therefore, I justly charge it upon *your principles*, which establish THIS power.

A DEFENCE OF

THE FOURTH PROPOSITION.

This proposition (see p. 7, 8.) contains proper Heads of Argument, by which it is capable of so clear and full a proof as hardly to need any farther Illustration, than to explain the Terms. That, to impose a Declaration of assent to the *Westminster*-Confession upon parents, as the condition of the baptism of their children, is a *new Term* of Communion, is proved by all the arguments by which I have proved, that such an Assent Imposed upon Candidates is a *new term* of Communion. That it *encourages an Implicit-Faith*; and the taking of the *name of God in vain* by the greatest number of parents, is evident from their want of sufficient Capacity, education, and opportunity to enable them to profess their assent with understanding and Judgment; and therefore their assent must be given with Implicit Faith or not at all; and they can't but take the name of God in vain, when they Solemnly declare an Assent in his presence, to what they do not know. Baptism is a seal of the Christian Covenant to which the seed of the Faithful are entitled; and therefore, the refusal of it is arbitrary, and a gross abuse of the pastoral office.

To this proposition you answer, p. 18, in those words.
 ' This proposition seems to be founded on Calumny and
 ' Misrepresentation, carrying in it an invidious insinua-
 ' tion, as if either the subscribing Body had made a Rule
 ' requiring all parents to declare their assent to the *West-*
 ' *minster*-Confession as the condition of the Baptism of
 ' their children; or, as if many of the subscribing Mini-
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sters had made a practice of it to require such a Declaration. You acknowledge (*Ibid.*) that 'if it be the common practice of any of our Ministers to make such a Rule for themselves, there is indeed, some ground for the hideous complaint contained in this proposition' but then you add, 'but if it be *altogether false and groundless*, as I firmly believe it is, till these charitable accusers of their subscribing Brethren prove their charge, they ought to be regarded as chargeable with an instance of the vilest detraction.' ANSW. To make short work of this, I undertake to prove the charge, by the Testimony of two unexceptionable witnesses; the first is *that* of the late Reverend Mr. *Abernethy*, who in the DEFENCE of the SEASONABLE ADVICE, says, p. 42. 'since Mr. M. has made it necessary to speak out this matter, I affirm it is Fact, that the very offence avowed to be taken at the nonsubscribing Ministers, and for which some parents have refused to have their children baptised by them, and applyed to other Ministers for that ministration, was, that they did not *absolutely bind* the parents to the *Confession*; expressing it in terms which I am not willing to repeat, and did not require them to profess it as the *Confession of their faith*' The second, is that of the late Revd. Mr. *Haliday*, who in his *Introduction* to his *Reasons against the Imposition of subscription to the Westminster-Confession of Faith &c.* faith p. 8, 9. 'In many Congregations within the bounds of this synod, parents are required, when their children are baptised, to declare their assent to all the principles contained in that book;-----This many of the Common people call their *being sworn into that Confession*, and their having their *children baptised into it*. I know it also from Experience that some Ministers have been deserted by their hearers, for refusing

‘ to swear them into the Confession of Faith, upon such occasions. An oath which few, if any, of our hearers are qualified to take, with understanding ’ To the Testimony of these two worthy Men, I can add my own from personal knowledge. When I was endeavouring in the year 1722, to convince some of my hearers, that their scruples against continuing under my Ministry were groundless, and particularly the *Scruple* they had, because I would not swear parents into the Confession of Faith, at the baptism of their children, I defended my practice from the arguments that now appear in our fourth proposition, to which one of them answered, that *he understood every Article in that Confession, and could be safely Sworn into it.* I answered, that tho’ I believed his sincerity in speaking as he thought, I could not think that he understood and believed all that is said in that Confession. Upon which I asked him two questions, to which he gave plain and positive answers, in a flat Contradiction to two Articles of that Confession. The Articles were read to him, to which he gave this surprizing answer, *Sir, you did not deal fairly by me; you ought to have first read me the Articles, and then I would have answered you right.* I do further declare, that I have heard divers subscribing Ministers take the obligation of parents, at the baptism of their children, in the following words, *You do promise to bring up your child in the principles of the protestant Reformed Religion, As the same are contained at large in the Holy Scriptures, and SUMMERLY COMPREHENDED in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, larger and shorter, and this in my humble opinion, comes fully up to the case put in this proposition.* I make it my earnest request that you would lay home to your own Conscience this Question, *who is it now that ought to be regarded as chargeable with an instance of the vilest detraction? You? or We? I*

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have proved *our* charge to be *true*, and *yours* to be *false*.
Let Conscience draw the Conclusion.

When you have nothing to say *against the truth* of this Proposition, you fall a carping at the conclusion of it, which sets forth our way of recommending the *Westminster-Confession* to parents at the baptism of their children. Which having little or nothing to do with the merits of the Cause, I shall dismiss with a very few Strictures. Ye say, that *we recommend to our people, summaries of Christian Doctrines, to which we ourselves have no clearness to Subscribe.* And what, then? The Confession is an unscriptural Term of Communion imposed upon us; and therefore, that we may make a just remonstrance against such an usurpation of Christs Supremacy, and assert our Christian Liberty, we are not clear to subscribe it, nor to *give place by subjection, no not for an hour* to those who impose it. But as your imposing this Book do's not make it a bad book, we make a good use of it ourselves; and recommend a good use of it to the Christian people, when you are making a very bad use of it; when you are making it an *Engine of Schism and Division*, we are making a proper use of it for promoting edification; and, particularly recommending it to parents as *a good summary of the main heads to Christian Doctrine*; and seeing children are to be chiefly instructed in the main Heads of the Christian Doctrine (and their parents too) and are not to be supposed capable of deciding all the nice points recited in the Confession; for that reason, we carry our recommendation no farther than as it relates to those main Heads, because carrying it any farther could serve no good purpose. This you invidiously call a *blotting out with the one hand what we subscribe with the other*; and that *an indefinite reservation in our subscription is a rasure upon it.* Your head is got so full

of Subscription, that you trump it up upon every occasion, as people do their By-words, without thinking on what they say. One objection is, that we recommend what we will *not subscribe*; another objection is, that we *have subscribed* and made a *rase* in our *subscription*. With one sort of people, such a loose declamatory ramble may gain, and pass for a piece of poignant wit; but to such as look for Argument, it will prove but a sorry entertainment. Your chief design seems to be, to compare our way of recommending the Confession, with your form of doing it, which is this, as you represent it, *p. 19.* ‘The
 ‘subscribing Ministers intimate to the parents, that having
 ‘impartially examined the *Westminster-Confession* and
 ‘Catechisms, and found the same agreeable to the Holy
 ‘Scriptures, and having subscribed their assent thereunto,
 ‘not implicitly, but upon due conviction of their Con-
 ‘formity to the word of God, they have great clearness
 ‘to recommend to the Christian parents the conscientious
 ‘perusal thereof; that proving all things they may hold
 ‘fast the Collection of Christian Doctrines mention’d, and
 ‘teach their children accordingly.’ Finding that you value yourselves mightly upon this Form, I take leave to suggest these things to your serious consideration. 1st, you introduce your recommendation with a rank party-preface, you assure the parents that you are of the favourite popular party of Subscribers: this appears to me to carry a great indecency in it, to give yourselves such airs in the solemn administration of one of the seals of the New Covenant, insinuating that none but one of your own Sect can say what you set forth, and tends to depreciate a Divine Institution, and to prostitute it to a party-view; as if it had more virtue in it, for it’s being dispensed by a subscriber. 2^{dly}, I think it a great fault, that you do not pay a sufficient regard to the Holy Scriptures,
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in this form of recommending the Confession. For by finding fault with us, for recommending it only as a good summary of the main heads of the Christian Doctrine, I must conclude, that you recommend all the Integral parts of it, whether Essential or unessential, to the Conscientious perusal of all parents, tho' you know it to be quite impossible for them to examine the whole according to the word of God. What must they do then, upon your recommendation? you have cut out their proper work for them, when you inform them, that proving all things, they may hold fast the Collection of Christian Doctrines mentioned, and teach their children accordingly. *****

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

Thus far the Reverend Author had gone in his manuscript, and no farther than page 89 in finishing for the press, when death deprived us of many blessings in his valuable life, compared with the least of which the supplying of this defect is but a trifle. I applied however to some of his friends for that purpose, who declined doing it, not from any diffidence of the goodness of his cause, or the justness of his defence, nor from want of regard to his memory; but partly because they imagined the argument had been sufficiently exhausted, and partly that no occasion might be given of, what they had reason to believe would be the case, representing this as the joint work of several heads laid together; a compliment to the author of a New Creed considered which they had no mind to pay, considering his performance as
little

little worth the attention of any one of them. This they have reason to think was the Doctor's own judgment of it, who for a long time neglected it, and at last was determined to consider it merely to have an opportunity of explaining and defending that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free from all human authoratative decisions, and of shewing the foundation on which it rests. From page 89 therefore the Printer only is to be considered as the Publisher; and he hopes that those Gentlemen who for the reasons above did not think it proper to add any thing to the performance of another, will, both from a regard to the cause, and the memory of the deceased, make amends, if a fit occasion offers, by something of their own.

I. B.

